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ABSTRACT

Part of the series "Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections," this report details the Kushanda Project, an early childhood education program in Zimbabwe. The Kushanda Project is a 16-person organization that has helped parents in rural Zimbabwe communities to understand the value of early childhood education and development. Since 1985, the Project has provided training to early childhood education and care center (ECEC) teachers and has worked to establish preschools. Beginning with a small preschool established with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation on an agricultural cooperative, 9 years later the Project encompasses 150 ECEC centers, caring for 5,000 children in two areas of rural Zimbabwe in Chinyika and Marondera. This report highlights the viewpoints of people involved in the Project--teachers, staff, and parents--using their own words to tell the Project's story. The chapters follow: (1) "The Kushanda Project"; (2) "Early Childhood Education in a New Nation"; (3) "Small Beginnings"; (4) "The Marondera Programme"; (5) "The Chinyika Programme"; (6) "Adult and Health Education"; (7) "The Federation of Kushanda Pre-schools: The Seeds of a Movement for Community Control and Ownership"; and (8) "Conclusion: Carrying the Torch." (BGC)

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Salih Booker

We are your children

the Kushanda early childhood education and care dissemination programme.

Zimbabwe 1985-1993

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We are your children

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Zimbabwe 1985 - 1993

Salih Booker

Early Childhood Development:
Practice and Reflections
Number 7

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About the series

The series *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections* addresses issues of importance to practitioners, policy makers and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in developing and industrial societies.

The series is a continuation of the Occasional Papers series, and the numbering therefore starts from No. 7.

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Salih Booker has twice served as a staff member for the United States Congress' Committee on Foreign Affairs, and has also worked for several NGOs and donor organisations in the USA and in Africa, including TransAfrica, The Ford Foundation and Catholic Relief Services. He has travelled widely for work in Africa, Latin America and Europe and has lived in Ghana, Kenya, France and Colombia in addition to the USA. He has worked as an independent consultant for International Affairs and Development, and lived in Zimbabwe 1990-1994.

About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is a private institution based in The Netherlands that concentrates its resources on support for early childhood development. The Foundation takes its name from Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist who died in 1958 and gave the entire share capital of his worldwide packaging industry for humanitarian purposes. The Foundation's income is derived from this industry.

The Foundation's central objective is to improve opportunities for young children who live in disadvantaged circumstances. It does this by supporting the development of innovative field-based approaches in early childhood development, and by sharing experiences with as wide an audience as possible in order to influence policy and practice.

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Author's preface

As a parent of two small children (aged five and seven years old), I feel that I have been the greatest beneficiary of the work that has gone into producing this text. I am sure that it has made me a better father, and my children and my wife are, therefore, also beneficiaries. It is funny how, when a child is born, we parents are immediately aware of how little we know about the mysteries of life, and in particular about early childhood development. But as the first months and years pass, many parents seem to develop a perspective of 'I am this child's parent, therefore I know what is best for her.' I am no exception to this conventional wisdom. What I have learned about early childhood education and care from the Kushanda Project staff, the teachers, the parents and others whom I met in the course of researching this book, has taught me that my ability to contribute to the birth of our children in no way conveyed an equally natural knowledge of how to raise them. Most parents' instincts regarding their own children's development are probably good and sound. Our ability to rely on our own parents' counsel and our memories of how we were raised certainly helps. Here again, I am no exception. But our beloved children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development in these crucial pre-school years are so vitally important they cannot be left entirely to intuition or tradition.

While working at my computer drafting this document, my daughter interrupted me to show me a drawing she had just done. Previously, I might have simply said, 'Oh that's nice, now please let me get back to my work.' But Kushanda had changed me, and so I stopped to look very closely at her drawing, which was indeed very creative, and to discuss it with her. I soon realised that she was very upset and almost in tears about a particular feature. The tail of her mermaid, she felt, did not look enough like the one I had drawn earlier in the day. But as I pointed out that her drawing actually looked much more like a real mermaid's tail than the one I had drawn (and my little boy loudly agreed), a smile spread across her face which – in its absolute beauty – struck me as being an enormous reward for my little effort.

We parents have a sacred obligation to learn about how our little ones develop – what is going on in their minds? – and about how we can best promote a healthy environment in which they can learn

and grow. We must respect and value the great work that is done by our children's pre-school teachers for they are very, very special people; and we must communicate often and clearly with our children's teachers and everyone else who shares a part of our youngsters' early lives. Most of all, we must communicate with our children in every sense of the word, and maintain a never-ending interest in their development. In the process we will learn a great number of things which we didn't know before about how they develop and what influences this development, and about the enormous power we, as parents, have to shape their future. It is a power which we must take responsibility for, and use responsibly.

I have taken the title for this book from a verse in a recent song by Letta Mbulu and Caiphus Semenya. As wife and husband, and as partners in music, they had lived in exile from their home, South Africa, for 26 years. Returning only in 1991, they quickly and clearly saw that 'the path to freedom is still long' in their troubled country. On an album which they recorded the following year entitled *Not Yet Uhuru*, they gave a voice to the millions of South African children whose futures hang in the balance. The song is entitled Unity and its message, while focused on South Africa, is universal. My own children often ask me to play this song, which begins with a chorus of children's voices. If we listen closely, the children of Zimbabwe, and particularly those cared for by the Kushanda Project, are trying to tell us the same thing:

> Mothers and fathers of South Africa
> We are the voices of your children
> Those who live and those yet to be born
>
> We are the undernourished
> The under educated, the homeless
> And the naked
>
> The voiceless victims of the infant mortality plague
> That has seen so many of us young ones buried
> Before reaching the age of one
>
> We are your children
>
> We call upon you today
> On our knees we implore you
> To please create for us a new day
> A new beginning, a new South Africa

In your hands lies our future
In your hands lies our destiny

We are your children
We are your children*

Salih Booker
June 1993, Harare

* Words and music: Caiphus Semenya
Published by: Muntale Music
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Members of the sewing club
ECEC trainees at the Kushanda Training Centre

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Mrs Nyawash, Farm Health Worker
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Mr Chinoperekweyi
Mr Viyano
Ms Maparura
Mrs Singizi

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Adult and Health Education (AHE)

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Martin Chapwanya, Senior AHE Instructor
John Ngirazi, AHE Instructor - Marondera
Steven Jali, AHE Instructor - Chinyika

Administration

John Conradie, Project Manager
Cephas Saungweme, Administrator
Lameck Mangwana, Transportation Officer
Aaron Tembo, Clerical Assistant

Maps of Africa and Zimbabwe

Facts in brief about Zimbabwe

Total Population	**10.9 million**
Under 16 years	5.1 million
Under 5 years	1.9 million
Urban Population	2.7 million (31% of total)
Population Annual Growth Rate (1980-1990)	3.1 %
Annual Growth Rate of Urban Population (1980-1990)	6%
Under 5 Mortality Rate	83 per 1,000
Infant Mortality Rate	58 " "
Life Expectancy at Birth	56 years
Adult Literacy Rate	67%
Percentage of Primary school children reaching grade 5	94%
Gross National Product per Capita	US$ 570
Rate of Inflation (1980-1989)	14%

Source: UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 1995
New York: Oxford University Press 1995

Abbreviations:

AGRITEX Agricultural Technical Extension Services
AHE Adult and Health Education
ECEC Early childhood education and care
ESAP Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FEP Foundation for Education with Production
FKP Federation of Kushanda Pre-schools
GM General Meeting (Annual)
NGOs Non-governmental Organisations
PTA Parent and Teachers Association
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
ZANU (PF) Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZAPU Zimbabwe African People's Union (international)
ZIMFEP Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production

Notes:

Daga (or pole and *daga*) - Long gum tree poles and anthill sand mixed with water which produces a mixture with a consistency somewhere between mud and cement.

ECEC Centres/Pre-schools - These terms are used interchangeably throughout the text.

Mahewu - A nutritious protein supplement provided by the Project and made up by ECEC teachers for the children.

Shandisayi - Shandisayi Pfungwa Cooperative in Marondera (also referred to here as 'the cooperative')

All figures are expressed in Zimbabwe Dollars throughout the text. In 1993, 1 Zimbabwe Dollar was roughly equal to US$ 0.15

Introduction

There are many types of parent and community participation, both non-formal and formal. In some developing countries, for example, centres for children would probably not exist were it not for the initiatives of parents and communities. Parent education is recognised as an excellent means to improve child-rearing practices and as an effective strategy in helping to reinforce parents' confidence and to increase their knowledge of child development. Furthermore, it helps facilitate collaboration between parents and those who are providing ECEC services.

Early childhood care and education: a world survey, UNESCO, 1991.

This is the story of dozens of small rural communities in Zimbabwe which are working together to give their children a chance to have a brighter future. A chance to develop to their full potential and to acquire the skills needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty that has held their families in its grip for generations. Through establishing village-based early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres, these communities are seeking to ensure that their pre-school children are safe; get proper health care; receive a supplementary nutritious diet; interact with at least one reliable adult; have interesting activities which contribute to their physical and mental development; and have other children to play with, thereby encouraging healthy social development.

While these communities have not always seen their ECEC centres in this light – and some still do not – the long and hard work of a small 16-person organisation called the Kushanda Project has, over time, assisted the parents in these communities to recognise the value and importance of early childhood education and development. Most importantly, the Project staff has made a significant contribution towards the parents' understanding that they are the most important force in determining whether these centres succeed in their mission.

This is also the story of the Kushanda Project and the process of development which it has helped to promote. Since 1985 the Kushanda Project has worked to provide training for ECEC teachers and to establish sustainable pre-schools in these locales. Each community comprises either labourers on large commercial farms,

Photo: 'Using what there is' – children play on a swing made by parents from materials found in the area.

or members of agricultural cooperatives, or rural peasant farmers. The Project started from a small pre-school that was established, with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, on one agricultural cooperative 90 kilometres from the capital Harare. Over the past eight years, the Project has expanded from this base and reached out to help establish and provide its services to 150 ECEC centres caring for over 5,000 children in two areas of rural Zimbabwe – Chinyika and Marondera (see map on page 12).

Not only are these two areas distinct geographically, they are also distinct socially and economically. Chinyika is the country's largest resettlement area on which the government, after independence, relocated landless peasants allocating small plots of land to each family. Though poor, the people who live in these areas have a stronger feeling of belonging and independence than their counterparts in the Marondera area of the project. The region of Marondera is mainly made up of large farms owned by wealthy, mostly white, farmers. These farmers employ large numbers of labourers to work on their farms who have no rights of tenure. The labourers therefore have no feeling of belonging or of responsibility towards the place where they are residing at that moment.

As these two areas are so different, the Kushanda Project had to develop two distinct approaches to working with their communities.

Use what is there

The Kushanda Project takes its name from the Shona expression, *Kushandisa zviripo*, which means 'to use what is there', or, 'to make what is there work'. This saying not only captures the Project's spirit of self-reliance, but also the fact that for the children of Zimbabwe's rural majority, ECEC services were only likely to become accessible if their parents learned how to use local resources to make community-based pre-schools a reality. Kushanda's mission was to show how this could be done.

The first Kushanda ECEC training centre and pre-school, on the Shandisayi Pfungwa cooperative, near Marondera, was housed in an old abandoned barn. Though the Project did receive some donations such as children's chairs and tables and some outdoor play equipment, the rest of the materials used in the pre-school were created by the trainees and Project staff themselves using locally available materials. These included toys made from scrap, charts, musical instruments, collections of birds' nests and feathers, animal bones and skulls, and a wide variety of other creatively

constructed educational tools. All of these materials were items which any trained teacher, and parents, could replicate in their own villages.

Using the material and human resources available in the immediate environment has been the hallmark of Kushanda's work.

Chapter 1

The Kushanda project

It was late in the afternoon and the sun had already begun its rapid winter descent to the horizon. The teacher trainees sat around the room on wooden benches listening closely to Emily Muzavazi, senior ECEC instructor, discussing some of the theoretical underpinnings of the 'six play areas' and the 'outdoor play area' that would be set up in each of the new pre-schools that they would return to their villages to organise.

It was getting dark and cold in the old school classroom, but the group of women continued to work. This was a normal day at the Kushanda Project's Training Centre in the Chinyika Resettlement Area. In the morning, the eight women had worked with Emily, the three teachers of the Arnoldine ECEC centre (described in Chapter 5), and most importantly the 60 children at the centre, to learn the practical side of operating a pre-school for three to six year olds. It was now the end of another day in their 12 week course where each afternoon they had lessons on early childhood development, discussed issues arising from their practical work, and learned to make toys out of locally available materials.

The trainees reflected on how they had heard about Kushanda and why they had come. One young woman had walked more than 25 kilometres to get to the training centre. She had heard about Kushanda ECEC training from a pre-school teacher in a neighbouring village. She had been interested in playing with the children of her village while their parents worked the fields, but she now saw ECEC as a profession. Most of the trainees had heard about Kushanda from the heads of their local primary schools, and each of them had been selected in a community meeting to become the future ECEC teacher. Some came from cooperatives. A few had already been working as childminders of sorts for the parents in their villages. Each of the women spoke highly of the quality of the training they were receiving and commented on how their perceptions of ECEC and the role of pre-schools had changed dramatically during their stay at the centre.

The issue of payment came up and it evoked mixed feelings. Several women who had already been caring for the children of their villages had rarely been paid, and many sensed that their communities' agreements to pay them to work as ECEC teachers was not guaranteed. Would parents really appreciate the new skills and the value of the education they would now be able to offer their

Photo: Training sessions are held wherever space can be found.

children? Or would the hard economic times prevent parents from meeting their obligations? How would they get the parents to participate in the activities of the pre-school? How could they promote community 'ownership' of the centres so as to ensure that parents took seriously not only their responsibilities for teacher salaries, but also their broader role in their children's early development? These were only a few of the challenges that lay before the trainees. But as one woman suggested, they were all part of the struggle to lead their children out of a life of poverty. 'We will continue to give education to the under fives even without pay, so that they won't remain in darkness', she concluded.

By 1993, the Kushanda Project had been operating for eight years. From very small beginnings, it has spread throughout much of three districts in the Mashonaland East and Manicaland provinces of Zimbabwe. Kushanda has helped to establish and train teachers for 150 ECE centres with an enrolment of around 5,000 children. The Kushanda 'programme' now in place has evolved from the experiences and demands of each passing year, but the basic principle remains intact. If a community would commit itself to: (1) select a teacher for training; (2) pay him or her a monthly salary; and (3) construct an ECE centre and an outdoor play area; the Kushanda Project would in turn provide: (1) training and follow-up support for the teachers and assistants; (2) assistance in establishing the centre; (3) materials such as *mahewu* (a nutritional drink), newsprint, paints; and (4) community organisation/ mobilisation and Adult Health Education services for the parents. This would include help with setting up Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) or other structures to provide a community framework for the work of the teachers and the operation of the pre-schools.

The Project has also evolved two distinct training approaches in the two separate geographic areas it covers from its small office in the home of the Project Manager, John Conradie, in Marondera. The approach at the Chinyika-based Training Centre, which mostly covers resettlement areas, is residential. During the week, the trainees reside in rooms at the Arnoldine Primary School where the centre is located, for the 12 week training courses for supervisors (senior teachers) and the six week courses for teachers and assistants. Kushanda's Senior ECE Instructor for the area also resides at Arnoldine during the week, travelling home to Harare to be with her family on weekends and between terms. She is supported by three Assistant Pre-school Instructors.

The approach in the Marondera Area of the Project is a four week on-site training course in the commercial farm labourer

communities. Gladys Chabaiwa, the Senior ECEC Instructor for Marondera, and Nancy Mvuma, the Head of Section for Follow-up Training, go to live among the farm labourers. They spend each morning working with the trainees and the children, and each afternoon providing lessons on ECEC theory and toy making. There are also two assistant pre-school instructors in the Marondera Area of the Project.

In both Chinyika and Marondera, follow-up training is provided through visits by the Senior Instructors and their Assistant Instructors, and 'cluster workshops' run by Nancy and comprising between four to six teachers per cluster.

The roles of the Kushanda Community Organiser, Jacob Mapuranga, and of the Adult and Health Education (AHE) programme staff, have similarly evolved over time. The Community Organiser is responsible for undertaking initial visits to villages or farms which have requested Project support, to explain the elements of the Kushanda programme and initiate a process of community mobilisation aimed at promoting parent participation in, and ownership of, their future ECEC centres. Jacob also has the task of continuous follow-up visits to monitor progress, to help with solving problems, and to continue promoting community mobilisation generally around the pre-schools that are established by the returning trained teachers. The senior AHE Instructor, Martin Chapwanya, along with two assistant AHE Instructors, is responsible for organising village health weeks in the communities where ECEC centres have been established. One Assistant is assigned to each of the two areas of the Project.

All Project staff enjoy the support and guidance of the Project Manager, John Conradie, and the Project Administrator, Cephas Saungweme, who plan and coordinate the Project's workplan. Further administrative support is contributed by a Project Transportation Officer and a Clerical Assistant. Because of the considerable distances between the various centres served by the Project, all staff play a key role in facilitating communications between and among the different geographic areas and sections of the Kushanda programme.

This seemingly straightforward programme of activities is the result of many years of experimentation and exploration by the Kushanda Project, and it is full of lessons learned along the way. It is a flexible project which adapts its methods to the particular needs of each of the communities it works with. It has taken time to develop, implement and improve upon an approach that works, and the road has been unpaved, twisting and turning.

Notes to chapter one

1. Zimbabwean winters can be quite cold. Contrary to common misperceptions that all of Africa is tropically hot all year round, nights are never warm in Zimbabwe even during the summer months. During the winter months it is not uncommon for the temperature to drop below zero degrees celsius at night, even though the day may have been sunny and warm.

Chapter 2

Early childhood education in a new nation

Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, following a century of British and white-minority settler colonisation and years of an escalating war of national liberation. Black majority rule was gained on the basis of the negotiated Lancaster House agreement which provided for a supervised transition to a democratically elected government, and allowed for an interim constitution which assured the protection of certain minority privileges and interests in the country. The Lancaster House agreement was to be valid for a period of 10 years. The nation's independence was significant on many levels: among them, it represented the triumph of African nationalism and the defeat of white supremacy as an ideology and political reality in the country. The Lancaster House agreement itself illustrated the possibilities, and also the limits, of negotiated settlements to the conflicts in South Africa and Namibia. Most importantly, however, independence meant that Zimbabweans would rule themselves.

At independence, Zimbabwe had the strongest and most developed economy in the sub-region excluding South Africa, but it was an economy characterised by one of the highest levels of income inequality in Africa. This extreme inequality had resulted in widespread poverty and the consequent underdevelopment of human resources among the black majority from early childhood to retirement. The results of the first democratic elections bestowed a considerable popular mandate on the new Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)' government to change, radically, the existing political and economic order in the country. But such changes would not come easily. Zimbabwe had inherited the clauses of the Lancaster House agreement; a largely foreign-controlled dynamic economy; an enormous racial imbalance in land ownership, and access to social services and financial resources; political divisions among the African majority; suspicion and hostility from the white settler community; and threats of military, political and economic destabilisation from South Africa. These constrained the new government's options for dealing with the countless problems awaiting its attention.

Zimbabwe was also bequeathed a colonial legacy which divided the country's land into three designated areas: freehold commercial farming land for whites; African Purchase Areas where Africans could own and farm medium- sized holdings; and Tribal Trust Lands for traditional African smallholder farms (now called

Photo: Children occupy an important place within traditional African culture.

Communal Land Areas). White-owned commercial farms comprised almost half of all agricultural land, and well over half of the most fertile land in Zimbabwe. In contrast, the Tribal Trust Lands, where at least half of the population lived, were of poor quality and usually less than a quarter of the average 23 hectare plot could actually be cultivated. Finally, an estimated 14 to 20 per cent of the African population worked and lived on the white commercial farms, with little access to land of their own. Despite its relatively high level of industrialisation, Zimbabwe had – and will continue to have for the foreseeable future – an economy based on agriculture. Access to land is, therefore, the fundamental determinant of the economic realities confronting the overwhelming majority of the country's population.

Resettlement efforts: land for the landless

Shortly after independence, the government embarked upon a policy of resettling former freedom fighters, the needy, the landless, and rural and urban war-displaced families into areas previously designated private commercial farms or which were unused. Resettlement was intended to: alleviate overcrowding; redistribute land on a more equitable basis; expand private and collective agriculture; improve the standard of living of the war-affected rural poor and the unemployed; and make the provision of government services easier to administer. The scope of this effort was restricted by the Lancaster House requirement that the government only acquire land on the basis of a 'willing seller, willing buyer' policy. By 1990, only about 52,000 families had been granted land in about 88 resettlement schemes, each consisting of several villages, throughout the country. The majority of such schemes were defined as Model A Resettlements under which the land was divided up into numerous smallholdings. Model B Resettlements consisted of large farms granted to agricultural cooperatives constituting the resettled population (often a combination of ex-fighters, former labourers, and other resettled families) and registered with the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development.

Zimbabwe's economic fortunes and misfortunes

Since the early 1980s the country has witnessed significant political development: most notably the institution of universal franchise; the progressive abolition of racial politics; and the merging of the two largest and previously rival political parties. Between 1980 and 1983, Zimbabwe experienced an economic boom which facilitated considerable expenditure on social welfare. This – along with new labour legislation, the resettlement of thousands of families on more fertile land, and increased investment in peasant sector

production – resulted in improvements in the socio-economic status of the poor. Considerable advances were made in health and education. Infant and maternal mortality rates, and the incidence of child malnutrition declined largely due to an expansion of health facilities and services in rural areas. In education, there was a significant expansion in both the number of primary and secondary schools and in enrolment, particularly among female students. Indeed, formal education has consistently been given the largest vote of the budget.

Since the mid-1980s, however, the country has been badly affected by unfavourable terms of trade, low private sector investment, labour displacement, and the stagnation of productive sectors. The agriculture-based economy has also suffered considerably from drought; especially during 1982 to 1984, and 1991 to 1992. The latter was the worst drought on record and it seriously threatened the country's progress in health care.

Zimbabwe has also been hurt by South African destabilisation. Pretoria's sponsorship of the war in Mozambique resulted in an influx of around 140,000 refugees into Zimbabwe, and led to Mozambican rebel attacks on poor villages in Zimbabwe. Inside Mozambique, the rebels attacked the railway, road and oil pipeline which link landlocked Zimbabwe to the closest port, Beira. These required considerable expenditure to protect. Zimbabweans are hopeful that the peace settlements to the conflicts in South Africa and Mozambique will be successful, and that peace in the region will have a salutary effect on their country's economy.

The implementation of an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, in 1991, has only added to the burden of the poor by reducing social welfare expenditures and prompting prices of all basic commodities to escalate.

A recent UNICEF report points out that:

> Because of economic trends, there are still certain sections of the Zimbabwean population whose economic status undermines their well being, food and socio-economic security. These include those wage earners and semi-employed labour on large scale farms, the peasant households who lack adequate land, draught power, wage remittances and other resources, households in the formal and informal sectors on or below poverty incomes and the unemployed. It also appears that those households with the greatest economic insecurity are less able to take advantage of social services directed at child development ...

There is evidence of a need for increased social development of the poorest to more effectively demand and direct resources towards their needs.'

When considered together, these 'sections' constitute the majority of the population. Moreover, with 48 per cent of the population under the age of 16, investments in children's health and education are likely to have a substantial impact on the nation's socio-economic prospects in the years ahead. The economy's increasing inability to sustain existing levels of social investment, particularly in education and health, imperils much of what has been accomplished to date. Equally it demonstrates the absolute need for poor communities to take greater control over community-level programmes to improve their children's education and development, and offer a possibility for the next generation to break out of the poverty cycle.

Government policy toward pre-school education

At independence the government promoted the establishment of early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres throughout Zimbabwe, particularly in the rural areas where the majority of the population – and the majority of the poor – reside. The conventional wisdom at the time held that the rural poor had never heard of either pre-schools or ECEC, let alone had access to such institutions. While this may have been true in terms of 'modern', mainly urban, forms of ECEC centres, the reality was quite different.

First, within traditional African culture, children occupied an important place in village social organisation. Children represented the future of the community, and therefore its continuity in relation to the ancestors. Though their role, as in so many cultures around the world, may have been to be seen but never heard, they were nevertheless the recipients of considerable attention and nurturing care from the adults of the community. Indeed, early childhood education and care was provided, often in the form of an *Mbuya*, 'grandmother' in the Shona language. This was an older woman who watched over small children when their mothers went to collect firewood. In-kind 'payment', such as some of the firewood, would be offered for the service provided.

Caring for the children also meant making dolls and telling stories which not only initiated the children into the traditions of their culture, but also conveyed to them the knowledge acquired through the generations which shaped these traditions. It involved taking the children to the forest, naming the trees and plants, and explaining how these could be used; teaching girls through play

how to grind; and making toy axes and spears to teach boys how to hunt. Traditional ECEC practices differed from its modern counterpart only in terms of formal institutional training for 'teachers', and in the regrettable lack of cultural relevance which characterises some modern ECEC institutions.

Second, even during the height of colonial repression and in the midst of the liberation struggle, when many rural communities were confined to so-called 'protected villages', communities, and in particular the women, established their own early childhood education centres relying entirely upon local resources. Ironically, the good intentions of the post-independence Zimbabwean government in promoting ECEC and promising government support may have undermined the self-sustaining nature of many of these community-based institutions as peasant families came to believe that their new government would assume responsibility for these efforts.

After independence, ECEC was initially the responsibility of the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. In 1982 a national early childhood education and care system was adopted, and attempts were initiated to standardise pre-school curricula and provide government support for basic infrastructural requirements at centres operating under the Ministry's jurisdiction. In 1987 the Ministry published a Curriculum Manual, and a Toy Production Manual, for trainers and pre-school teachers to improve the quality of pre-school services. Though many observers, and a recent government-commissioned report, contend that the manual is too difficult for most ECEC teachers, it is still a valuable resource particularly for trainers.

In July 1988 responsibility for ECEC was handed over to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (now the Ministry of Education and Culture) from the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. According to one experienced ECEC trainer

> 'This change is an improvement because the previous Ministry did not have the professional expertise required in the area of early childhood development. ECEC is, in any case, more appropriately part of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education.'

Though new administrative structures were created, and other structures were re-oriented to accommodate this new responsibility, ECEC has yet to be fully integrated into the total educational structure. Ministry officials report that they still lack

adequate staff to cover ECE and that they do not have sufficient documentation on ECE centres' links to other local development structures or on personnel, enrolment, registration, and rules and regulations.

More importantly, the Ministry has little or no budget to carry out an ECE programme on a national basis. While the government has sought to provide leadership in the area of ECE development, it has never been in a position to provide much direct financial and material support to the emerging ECE centres and their teachers in poor rural areas throughout the country. In urban areas some pre-schools are run by the local municipalities, and there are a large number of privately owned, and fee-paying, pre-schools.

The government has, however, established several 'model' centres, and developed and disseminated both a training curriculum and an ECE curriculum. In 1988, with donor support, the government started a national ECE teacher training programme by deploying 16 training officers who had been trained at the country's largest early learning centre to the country's eight regions. By the end of 1989, this number grew to 55 – one training officer for each of Zimbabwe's districts. The officers had a mandate to train hundreds of pre-school teachers for ECE centres throughout the country.

This training programme has encountered a host of problems and is seriously behind schedule. These problems include the absence of suitable venues such as operating pre-schools for training, so that hotels are often used; transport difficulties for training officers; and a lack of instruction in the more widely spoken African languages of Zimbabwe. Most significant perhaps, is the training programme's inability thus far to attract the strong involvement of the communities whose children are to be served by these ECE initiatives.

Though the present government has a radically different outlook toward ECE than the previous white minority regime, there has been no new direct legislation on early childhood education and care since independence. The old Rhodesian Nursery Education Act has little relevance to the needs of most of the children in Zimbabwe today. Its 'standard conditions' of staff qualifications, space requirements, staff-child ratio, sanitary requirements, and the physical condition of buildings, defined prior to independence for the white minority elite of society, have little relation to the realities of Zimbabwe's poor rural majority, and the resources available for meeting such conditions. Sadly, a recent government initiative to gather data on existing ECE centres exhibited strikingly similar misconceptions about what constitutes a valuable and appropriate

pre-school in the context of the realities of the rural poor. For example, one of the questions on the government circular asks, 'What is the number of flush wash closets (a) having nursery school bowls? (b) having adult bowls with platforms? and (c) for staff use?' Many centres in rural areas do not have toilets of any type.

The Bindura model

Despite these shortcomings, the government has helped establish a number of creative programmes which have already had a positive impact on, and hold potential for further improvements in, the lives of poor rural children. One such endeavour is the Kubatsira Farm Health Project which was started in Bindura in 1981. Following independence, the Ministry of Health committed itself to bringing health care 'to all by the year 2000', and began laying the groundwork for its main institutional thrust, namely the development of a network of village health workers and clinics operating through local administration. Notwithstanding the impressive gains that would eventually be made through this approach, the government recognised early on that this network would not cover the enormous number of farm labourer communities throughout the country whose health problems were in many ways even graver than those of the impoverished communal land areas.

Based firmly on the government's philosophy of community action and self-sufficiency, it launched a pilot programme of training farm health workers which was centred around the Bindura Hospital and focused on the neighbouring commercial farms. This programme aimed to give farm labourers themselves the chance to become their own primary health care workers in all but the most difficult problems by educating them about the health needs of their communities, and especially those of the children. The other vital aspect of the programme was to get rural and district hospitals involved with the people, to convert them from respected but rather forbidding institutions into genuine community health centres.

Initially, two women from each participating farm were chosen by their communities to spend a month at Bindura Hospital's 'helping' centre, training to become farm health workers. The training followed the Ministry's guidelines, and the women were taught first aid; basic health care; causes of diseases; how to recognise, and in some cases treat, certain illnesses; the necessity of immunisation; and hygiene and nutrition education. As discussions moved to the subject of child health care and the health conditions which prevailed among children at that time, the organisers of the programme were convinced that some form of child care should be

promoted as part of the training. ECE for the children of farm labourers was seen to be urgently needed because of the generally long hours which their parents worked.

Thus, the original training was extended by two weeks to include education on setting up and running pre-schools. As one of the early supervisors at the Project pointed out,

> 'Many of the children in the area not only go short of proper food, but are starved of mental and social stimulation as well ... the centres that the women (the trained farm health workers) will now be able to lead in the farm villages are vital to the children's development.'[4]

The Bindura model pilot programme has since been expanded into a provincial programme that eventually will operate throughout the commercial farming areas of Mashonaland Central. During the expansion and evolution of the programme, women's clubs and adult literacy training activities were introduced to reinforce the health education and care provided by the farm health workers, and to help mobilise community participation and support for the pre-schools.

The Bindura model served as an inspiration for many other rural health education and ECE initiatives that would emerge elsewhere in the country in the years to come. The Kushanda Project was one of these.

Notes to chapter two

1. ZANU (Patriotic Front), is one of the two liberation movements which negotiated the independence settlement with the white minority regime and contested the elections as a political party. The other was the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). ZANU (PF) also won the second elections in 1985. In 1987, ZAPU merged with ZANU and the new combined party (still known as ZANU-PF) won the country's third national elections in 1990.

2. Following the expiry of the Lancaster House agreement in 1990, the government adopted new land acquisition legislation in 1992 intended to permit a more equitable distribution of this vital resource by allowing government to designate unused or underused farms to be acquired at government determined fair prices for redistribution to thousands of land-hungry Zimbabwean families.

3. Loewenson, R., et al. *Children and Women in Zimbabwe: A Situation Analysis Update, July 1985-July 1990*. Harare: The Government of Zimbabwe and UNICEF, 1990, p.3.

4. *Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*. No.12, November/December 1981, pg.16.

Chapter 3

Small beginnings

The Kushanda pre-school programme grew out of a development project based at a farming cooperative named Shandisayi Pfungwa – which means 'use your brains' – 15 kilometres from Marondera. The cooperative was started a few years after independence on a resettlement farm by young Zimbabwean ex-freedom fighters who also recruited the men and women who had previously worked on the farm. The original project was managed by two NGOs, the International Foundation for Education with Production (IFEP) and the Zimbabwe Federation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP), and the members of the Shandisayi Pfungwa cooperative, with the financial support of two foreign donors. The goal of the development project was to diversify and expand the economic base of the cooperative by establishing agro-industries which would benefit both the families at the cooperative and the large number of people in the neighbouring Soswe Communal Land.

Integrated development

In the early post-independence days a great deal of hope was vested in the government's resettlement programme. This effort was fuelled by the belief that the creation of farm cooperatives on land acquired by the government from white commercial farmers, would promote the integrated development of disparate groups of people.

The concept of integrated development pursued at Shandisayi Pfungwa recognised that progress on the cooperative farm and on the neighbouring communal lands was not simply a question of economics, skills training, and material and financial inputs. The project's concept of development gave equal attention to raising the level of consciousness among the cooperative workers and the people of Soswe, and helping them to raise their standard of living and therefore that of their children. To this end a social component was developed comprising adult education and literacy, health and nutrition with extension training, and early childhood education.

The first cycle: planning a pre-school

The inclusion of a pre-school programme was not by chance. At the cooperative there were simply too many children in the fields. Women complained that they were doing double the work of men

Photo: Children are often left in the care of an untrained community member – often an old person – while their mothers work in the fields.

because they worked in the fields and cared for their children simultaneously. This arrangement was also unhealthy for the children. The cooperative's management committee agreed that two women play with the children while their mothers were in the fields. The parents felt that these women should receive training to gain the know-how to provide proper care, and to promote the children's education in preparation for formal school.

Having accepted the need for a training programme, ITP and ZIMFEP requested funding from the Bernard van Leer Foundation which agreed to finance the training programme and provide other project support. Two trainers, Gladys Chabaiwa and Emily Muzavazi, who had graduated from St. Mary's Early Learning Centre in Chitungwiza, the largest and oldest training centre for ECE in the country, were selected. Their names were suggested to the Project Manager by Bertha Gapara who heads St. Mary's and is widely regarded as a leading ECE professional and proponent of pre-schools nationwide. The first intake of four trainees, two from Shandisayi Pfungwa and two from villages in Soswe, received two years training. The pre-school at the cooperative was established simultaneously with the start of the training programme in 1985, and served as a centre where the trainees could combine theory and practical experience while working with children and managing an ECE centre.

The parents at Shandisayi Pfungwa were impressed with the results. Nevertheless, the Project faced its fair share of difficulties. Initially the concept of community 'ownership' of the training programme was a problem. Because the SCODS (ITP and ZIMFEP) had secured donor funding and were responsible for putting together and managing the training programme and the ECE centre, it was sometimes difficult to get the full support and participation of some parents who viewed the training programme as belonging to the Kushanda Project.

There were also early misconceptions about the role of the pre-school. Though the parents themselves had requested an ECE programme for their children aged three to six, some felt that it was a baby minding service where they could leave their infants. The Project staff tried to explain the purpose of the ECE programme that they had designed in response to the parents' initial requests and also made it clear that the women in the programme were still trainees and would not have the time to look after babies.

Though the idea of establishing a separate programme for a creche for children under three years old was discussed, many other

parents felt that it was inappropriate for others to care for their youngest children. Among parents who supported the establishment of a crèche there was, at the same time, an unwillingness to take on additional responsibilities for developing and managing it. The Kushanda Project also lacked the human and financial resources needed to add a crèche to the programme. In the end, there was no consensus among the parents on the subject and Kushanda staff did not wish to impose a programme when there was no clear demand from the parents for such a service.

This experience served to shape Kushanda's approach to the question of services for children under three. The Project would be open to the possibility of expanding services to include this age group, if the communities requested such a service and were prepared to join in the same type of partnership to which they were committed for the pre-schools. Meanwhile, the Project would seek to meet some of the needs of zero to three year olds through its health education and community mobilisation activities. These aimed to improve the overall health and sanitation conditions in the communities, and promoted the vaccination of all children against the major childhood diseases.

Early efforts at parent education

Concurrent with the pre-school programme, the Project established a Women's Club to offer education to mothers in several areas related to their domestic environment, and to help them increase their capacity to take and implement decisions to improve that environment. Health and nutrition, and adult literacy and education programmes were launched to complement each other, the Women's Club and IGA activities. The adult literacy and education programme had the twin aims of providing basic literacy and general education; and of furthering the knowledge of production activities. The Project also planned to establish a health centre/clinic to provide both services and education, to enable the participating communities to improve their own and particularly their children's health status.

Each of these distinct elements were equally important, and Kushanda staff believed that progress in one area would help to achieve progress in the other areas as well. Funding for all elements of this social component of the Project was provided by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Talent Nyathi, was hired to coordinate the whole programme, and Martin Chapwanya to lead the adult education programme.

Assessing the earliest efforts

By the end of the Project's second year, the four teachers had been trained – two for the Shandisayi ECE centre and two for Soswe – and the staff had made progress in the area of parent participation. The PTA took responsibility for organising an end of term open day for all the parents and communities. One innovation was the four trainees' displays of their craft work, with each parent adjudicating the work of the different displays.

Kushanda also organised trips to the Lion Park near Harare for the pre-school children, parents, the trainees and other support staff. These trips not only offered an important educational exposure to another environment for a community that rarely had the chance for such recreational outings, but allowed parents to see the educational nature and value of the staff's approaches to all activities concerning their children.

The quality of the ECE programme at Shandisayi Pfungwa had attracted the interest of parents living in Marondera and a steady increase in the enrolment of fee-paying children from Marondera provided an important source of revenue for the centre.[7] At that point, there were 70 children attending the pre-school, of which 28 came from outside the cooperative. The word was beginning to spread about the work of the Kushanda Project. This would eventually facilitate the implementation of an outreach programme to promote pre-schools in other poor villages and farm worker communities.

Trials and tribulations along the road

The successes of those first two years did not come easily. The ECE centre was meant to be a model for rural women of little means to replicate in their villages without too much expense or difficulty. Some of the participants in the programme wanted the new centre to become a copy of the better endowed urban centres, and failed to see that these could never be duplicated in rural settings where people relied primarily on the resources of the communities themselves, with limited support from the Kushanda Project.

The adult education programme showed signs of becoming a study group for those undertaking advanced education, when the intended priority target group was the illiterate and semi-literate workers at the cooperative, whose participation was declining. Similarly, the Women's Club sometimes seemed little more than a traditional sewing group. It was unable to promote the education needed to enable women to increase their control of their family

environment, and to gain a broader appreciation of family health problems and the concepts of early childhood development. The health programme encountered delays owing to the need to integrate its proposed activities into the framework of government health care and education programmes.

In an attempt to integrate other components into the ECEC programme, efforts had been made in the Adult Education programme to get some of the older workers/students to provide an oral history of their lives on the farm during colonial times. This could be used both as a vehicle for learning in the literacy and basic education classes and, eventually, to invite the best storytellers to tell their stories to the children at the ECEC centre. Unfortunately, this creative idea did not take off, owing to the pressures on workers' time and their inability to see immediate benefits arising from this kind of participation.

The Women's Club slowly worked its way through a syllabus developed by Talent aimed at giving the women of the cooperative a better understanding of their domestic environment and of how to improve it. The Club's activities were also intended to increase the women's capacity to make decisions and implement them in their homes, in their Club, the pre-school PTA, and in the wider cooperative where too often men make all the decisions. But few women actually changed their behaviour as a result of these efforts.

The basic problem the staff faced seemed to be one of community mobilisation. With the work going on at the cooperative – the planning and establishment of new production units, the daily farming and the efforts to make the cooperative succeed economically – the adults had little time or energy to fully meet the demands of the social component of the Project. Through all these difficulties, the Kushanda Project persevered and evolved methods of trying to reconcile the participants' objectives of receiving immediate results from the social component programmes, with its own longer term objectives of community education and empowerment.

Nevertheless, the social component continued to be considered an integral part of the development process at Shandisayi, and in the end all the elements (within both the production and social development programmes) offered a natural and mutually reinforcing link with one another.

The second cycle: a second chance

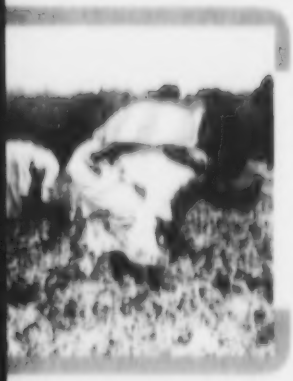
Favourable reports on the Kushanda Project's ECEC training had been spread by word of mouth by, among others, the Marondera District Administrator who sat on the Management Committee of the Project, and by the wife of an Agritex Extension Officer[1] working with peasant farmers in the Headlands area, 62 kilometres east of Marondera. This created a growing demand for the ECEC training service in the neighbouring areas and necessitated the implementation of a shortened training period. The second intake at the Shandisayi training centre in 1987 involved the selection and enrolment of new trainees, and the revision of the syllabus to allow the training to be completed in a single three-month term, instead of the original two years. This second cycle eventually totalled three sets of two or three trainees, each on a three month course at the cooperative's ECEC centre during 1987-1988. During this time two new pre-schools were established in villages in the neighbouring Soswe communal area by two of the original trainees with support from the Kushanda Project, the parents and the Village Development Committees of these communities.

A problem arose in one community where parents in the home ward of the newly trained teacher were unwilling to send their children to the ECEC centre in a larger village. This was despite the fact that the small number of pre-school children in their ward didn't justify a separate centre. At the same time, parents in the larger village seemed equally reluctant to send their children to the centre. Over time, this predicament was resolved through the establishment of two ECEC centres in the area. The experience, which is the only case where the Kushanda Project withdrew its support altogether, was illustrative of the kinds of unexpected problems that the Project would face as it expanded, and which would require considerable amounts of staff time to sort out.

A growing demand for ECEC

The Kushanda Project had achieved its first objective: the creation of a model for establishing rural pre-school training centres and supporting small village or farm pre-schools established by trainees returning from the Centre. Local government officials from the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs not only accepted the work of the Project, but had begun to make requests for the training of teachers for villages in their jurisdiction. Most rural villages are extremely isolated, located long distances from government offices and lacking any alternative services in the near vicinity.

The training that the Project had given three women from cooperatives around Headlands during the second cycle interested the ministry's office in Rusape, 100 kilometres east of Marondera, in getting Kushanda involved in training and support activities aimed at establishing pre-schools in the huge Chinyika Resettlement Scheme lying north of Rusape and Headlands in the Makoni District. Similarly, a pre-school established by a trainee in the Bethel cooperative, near Headlands, caught the attention of a nearby primary school headmaster who requested assistance to establish pre-schools to serve the three resettlement villages which fed into his school.



By the end of 1988, the fourth year of the Project, the Kushanda pre-school centre at Shandisayi was so well established and maintaining such a high standard that there was a long waiting list of parents from Marondera wishing to enrol their children at the centre and who were prepared to pay fees.[1] This, though a measure of the success of the centre, resulted largely from its geographical proximity to Marondera and would not be replicable at other centres where continued material support would be needed to supplement the community's efforts.

Feedback from teachers and heads of primary schools where children from Kushanda ECE centres enrolled in Grade 1, indicated that these children were speaking with confidence ahead of their peers who had not had the benefit of ECE. They were also already accustomed to an 'institutional' learning environment and were finding it easier to learn and to get along with other new students.

Looking back, the most difficult challenge for Kushanda and for the cooperative management had been to reconcile the longer term objectives of the Project with the more immediate individual expectations of the cooperative workers. This same challenge would present itself time and again among other communities that Kushanda would work with in the years ahead. Since participation in the programmes at Shandisayi – including sending children to the ECE centre – was entirely voluntary, their continuation or success would depend solely upon the parents' interest in, and feeling of ownership over, these activities whose only beneficiaries were themselves and their children.

Within the context of the overall agenda at Shandisayi Pfungwa, the performance of the ECE training and support programme was quite an accomplishment. Its success was now drawing it into new geographic and programme directions. The time had come to move on.

Photo: Many women have to work and take care of their children simultaneously.

Kushanda spreads its wings: the outreach programme

In 1989, the Kushanda Project handed over the ECEC centre to the Shandisayi Pfungwa cooperative.[7] The teachers at the centre took control of the day-to-day activities, and the cooperative assumed responsibility for administering and developing the pre-school, and for continuing to provide the teachers' salaries. Though the Project was moving its base for training away from the cooperative, the staff continued to provide follow-up support to its teachers, including supervisory visits, cluster workshops, and sharing information on new ECEC methods.

The success of the Project in training teachers and establishing several new pre-schools in the neighbouring Makoni District, had created a significant demand for ECEC services there. This provided an important opportunity to replicate the model developed at the cooperative in a larger resettlement and communal land area spread across several districts.

The Project followed the same approach in the Chinyika Resettlement Area that it had evolved at Shandisayi: namely the establishment of an ECEC training centre which included an operating pre-school, and the development of 'satellite' pre-schools in the surrounding area started by graduates of the training programme. In this manner, Kushanda hoped to bring a low-cost method of early childhood education and care to hundreds of disadvantaged rural children.

In the commercial farming area around Marondera, the Project was forced to develop a different strategy for promoting pre-schools among the farm worker communities. Lacking the opportunity to establish a centralised training centre with residential facilities for trainees that could spawn 'satellite' pre-schools on neighbouring farms, Kushanda adopted a new method based on intensive on-site ECEC training of women farm health workers. This innovation joined health and ECEC, and also suited the particular needs of the farm communities.

In both Chinyika and Marondera, the Kushanda Project insisted on the principle that training for pre-school teachers could only take place where an ECEC centre existed, in order to ensure that practical training was a major part of the programme. This was a principle that Kushanda had developed at the Shandisayi Pfungwa Cooperative, and one which it would never abandon. Among the farm worker communities, this required the establishment of pre-schools as a part of the on-site training.

Having designed both of the two areas' programmes to meet this condition, the Kushanda staff were now ready to expand the reach of Kushanda's ECD services.

Notes to chapter three

1. Chitungwiza is Zimbabwe's largest wholly black urban centre, roughly 9 kilometres south of Harare, with an estimated population of over one half million people.

2. One of these first trainees, Nancy Mvuma, later became a Senior ECD Instructor in the Kushanda Project responsible for the highly valued cluster workshops for follow-up training of teachers. Her own performance has been a testimony to the quality of the training programme.

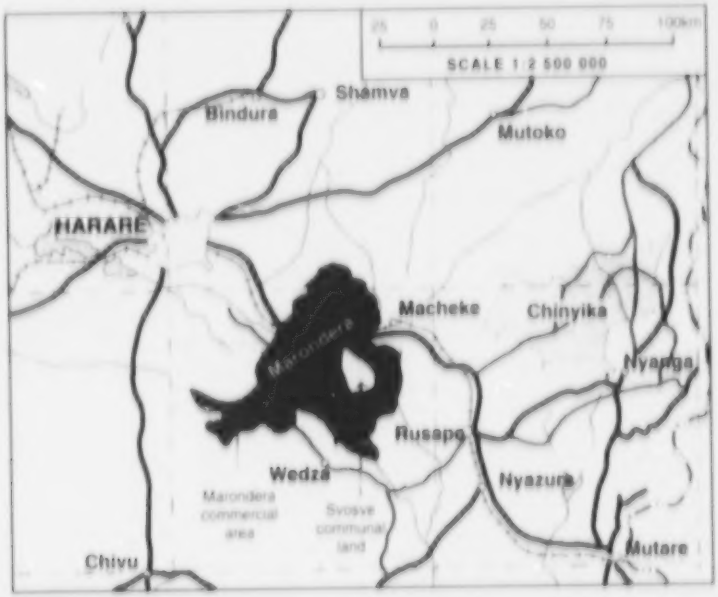
3. Marondera parents paid $14 a child per term (12 weeks) in the early days, which increased with each passing year to reach $120 per term by 1992.

4. AGRITEX (Agricultural Technical Extension Services) is a government agency.

5. Parents who were members of the cooperative also began to pay a smaller fee of $15 per child per term which contributed to the centre's financial viability.

6. Interestingly, many 'veterans' of the Project's days at Shandisayi feel that the cooperative truly developed a sense of ownership of the ECD centre only after the departure of the Kushanda Project staff and the end of direct project financing for the cooperative's pre-school.

The Marondera programme



Some 75 kms southeast of Harare lies Marondera, the provincial capital of Mashonaland East. The Project here encompasses 75 pre-schools, which serve an estimated 2,000 children of farm labourers living on the grounds of the commercial farms where they work. Kushanda's outreach to these communities began in 1989. The large farms around Marondera are mostly owned by white farmers and companies, and chiefly produce tobacco and grains. The area is the hub of the country's growing wine industry, and an important centre for cattle ranching. The farmland around Marondera contains better quality soil than in Chinyika and has an almost park-like appearance with large open and cleared fields, long lines of trees shading the well maintained roads around the farms, and scenic views to the distant bush covered hills. The scenery reflects the almost continuous cultivation of the area for over 100 years.

Photo: Conditions for many farm workers have improved since Independence – many farm owners now provide water to the labourer communities.

The forgotten people

Today one Zimbabwean in five comes from farm labourer households. Farm labourer communities on the big commercial farms throughout Zimbabwe can be described as 'the forgotten people'. They are perhaps the poorest and most politically and socially marginalised section of the country's population. They have little employment security and usually no permanent home. Historically, these communities comprised a high percentage of migrant workers from Malawi and Mozambique recruited in the 1940s, who were considered 'foreigners'. Their existence – let alone their plight – was often simply ignored by society at large, and by government agencies. This was certainly true in colonial times, and changes in attitude have come very slowly over the years since independence. After residing continuously for 50 years in Zimbabwe, and establishing families through marriages to Zimbabweans, these workers are not foreigners today. When they end or lose employment on the farms their families have nowhere else to go, since it is difficult for them to gain access to land either inside or outside the country.

The well maintained and tree-lined roads that serve the tobacco farming and cattle ranching owners, stand in stark contrast to the often overcrowded, austere and poorly maintained quarters for the men and women who work the fields. These workers generally live out of sight of the main roads in either barrack-like one room cubicles or traditional pole and *daga* huts. All the workers and their families live in very close quarters and often have no sanitation facilities or clean water in the compound. Each community of farm labourers is virtually cut off not only from nearby cities and many government services but equally from workers' communities on other farms. They don't own the shacks, huts or barrack block rooms they reside in, but might have use of a small plot of land near the compound to grow the vegetables which form the main complement to their maize meal diet. The Marondera farms are probably representative of commercial farms throughout Zimbabwe in terms of living conditions for the large workforces that reside on them.

Most farm labourers are seasonal workers and thus have no economic security whatsoever. Despite improvements in conditions since independence, their household income is at the bottom of Zimbabwe's salary/wage scale, and their children have a higher rate of malnourishment. Many workers only earn the minimum monthly wage of $157, two thirds of which is likely to be spent on purchasing maize meal for their families. They therefore do not often have the money to travel beyond the confines of the farm.

In any case, there is no public transport for these workers, and they must walk great distances to the nearest spot on the main Harare to Mutare road in the hope of hitching a ride or catching a bus that stops in the few small towns every 30–50 kilometres or more in either direction. In addition to the extremely long hours that most labourers work, often six days a week, the absence of transport means that most workers spend almost all their time on the farms. The only forms of recreation generally available on the farm grounds are a beer hall[1] and an occasional dirt field where men and boys can play football, sometimes competing against workers from nearby farms.

Too many farm labourer families still live in inadequate and overcrowded housing which leads to poor basic hygiene and, therefore, a high incidence of disease. Most of them also do not have direct access to safe water and/or toilets. At independence, the children of farm workers received – on average – only two meals a day of *sadza*[1] and vegetables; most received meat only once a week if at all, and the majority had never tasted milk, eggs, and other foods vital in combating malnutrition.[1]

Since independence, living conditions for workers on most farms have improved considerably as many farmers have been persuaded by the government to provide better housing, construct toilets, and sometimes provide clean water. As there are no legislative requirements in this regard, the process of upgrading has been very uneven across Zimbabwe. Farmers have been responding either to the government's moral persuasion or to perceived political threats to their continued ownership of the farms. Many commercial farmers provide schools, clinics, clean water, land, improved housing and other amenities for their workers – a fact readily acknowledged by health workers and aid organisations. But this is by no means universal. The key to improved conditions, where they have occurred, has been the intervention of government and NGOs in cooperation with commercial farmers and their Rural Councils, in providing services and enabling the workers' communities to better control their own lives.

The local authority in this farming area is the Marondera Rural Council. Rural councils in Zimbabwe comprise representatives elected exclusively by farm owners and are responsible for the maintenance of the areas' physical infrastructure which serves the farm communities, for example roads, schools and clinics. The government funds the provision of social services, such as teachers' and nurses' salaries, within this infrastructure. After independence, the government and the rural councils developed a

Farm Health Worker Programme to train one woman from each farm's workforce to provide basic health services and education to the farm labourer communities. This initiative, the first such collaborative effort of its kind between the new black majority government and the still predominantly white rural councils, was also the first effort to improve the health and welfare of farm labourers throughout the country.

The Kushanda Project was able to cooperate with this programme, and with individual farm owners, to promote the establishment of pre-schools among farmworker communities in the area. It did this by providing a short course on Early Childhood Development (ECD) to the trainees in the Farm Health Worker Programme and, eventually, by launching an outreach programme to offer them four weeks of intensive on-site ECD training in their own communities to establish community-run pre-schools.

The Project's work in Marondera was without precedent in Zimbabwe, and proved to be effective in gaining the confidence of these forsaken communities and helping them in turn to develop the self-confidence needed to run their own ECD programmes. It was not, however, an easy approach, and Kushanda staff had to work through a series of interlinked relations with farm owners, farm managers, the Rural Council, the Ministries of Health and of Education, workers' councils, parents' committees, and local primary school officials and teachers, in order to give life to pre-schools in this area. Relations with the farm workers were, of course, the most important for Kushanda but also the most demanding. Kushanda staff were often the only 'outsiders' in regular contact with these closed communities. After the initial training, Kushanda continues to provide follow-up training and supervision to the pre-school teachers on these farms.

Community mobilisation, however, has been much slower and more difficult among the farm worker communities of Marondera compared to those of Chinyika. These workers generally feel that any development on the farms is ultimately for the benefit of the farm owners. This includes the pre-schools, because these help make the workforce – particularly the women – more productive. The workers lack a sense of 'home' within, not to mention ownership over, their 'compounds'. They all know that they could be out of a job the next day or the next season and would have to move on in search of work, leaving anything they might have developed or constructed behind on the farm.

Photo: Parents begin to appreciate the activities that a trained 'teacher' carried out with their children.

Since its inception, the Kushanda Project has sought to find a way, in cooperation with government agencies and the Marondera Rural Council, to implement a health and nutrition programme for the farm worker communities based on the Bindura model of close links between pre-school training and health education.

In 1986 Kushanda staff were invited to provide four day courses on the basics of ECD to the women trainees in the Marondera Rural Council's Farm Health Worker Programme. Though a considerable number of courses were run up to 1990, these did not provide the degree of integration between health education and ECD that the Project was seeking. Moreover, they did not stimulate the establishment of pre-schools on the farms. Kushanda's participation in this programme did, however, lead to useful interaction and contacts with the Rural Council, farm owners and farm health workers.

By building upon its contacts with the Marondera Rural Council, the Kushanda Project was, in 1988, put in touch with the owners of five commercial farms who had expressed an interest in the Project's proposed outreach into the Marondera area. All five farms were reasonably close to one another, just southwest of Shandisayi Pfungwa's land. Visits were made by senior staff accompanied by Jacob Mapuranga – the Rural Council's medical assistant at that time – to discuss the proposed ECD programme with the owners and to solicit their support, or at least to gain their agreement to give Kushanda access to the worker communities and in particular to the trained farm health workers.

The Project's decision to focus on training the farm health workers came naturally. Kushanda wanted its programme to be seen as an extension of, or complement to, the existing farm health worker training programme. Such an approach would give the Project a better status with the farm owners and with the government programme, and most importantly it would provide entry into the rather closed life of farm worker communities. This approach also reflected the underlying assumptions and models upon which Kushanda had been developed, namely the combination of pre-school training with education in child health care.

Land of contrasts

Entering into the sequestered 'world' of the farm labourer was not easy. Project staff would have to travel long distances to talk to the parents and farmers, and to schedule a workplan with the farm health workers.

> 'We never knew what we would encounter,' one Project staff member recalled, 'there's nobody else out here travelling around to visit the workers, and at first both the farm owners and the workers were suspicious of us. People from the union trying to organise farm labourers didn't have the transport to get around much and they were usually turned away at the gate anyway.'

Kushanda staff had to spend a good deal of time talking to the owners – and waiting to talk to the owners – to gain access to the workers' compound. Often the farm health worker and other labourers want to be assured that the owner had authorised the visit.

But Kushanda staff's real hard work commenced once it had an audience among the workers.

Outsiders come in: promoting ECEC on the farms

In the early days of 1989, two of the senior Kushanda ECEC staff, Gladys Chabaiwa and Nancy Mvuma, would visit the farm health workers on five farms only one or two days a week for on-site training. It quickly became apparent that this was insufficient, and an approach of four weeks on-site intensive training was adopted.

Such a strategy was in many respects revolutionary. It broke the historic barriers between the invisible world of farm workers and mainstream society. The fact that skilled and experienced professional trainers would come and live among the workers, while initially puzzling to these families, gradually erased the false distinction between the 'us' and 'them' that many farm workers held regarding Zimbabwean society.

Given the unique circumstances of these communities, it was important to break their isolation, and demonstrate to the parents that their children should have access to early childhood education and care; that it was within their reach, and was a serious matter requiring on-site training.

The approach of residential training was extremely difficult for the Kushanda staff, particularly the initial adjustments. Gladys and Nancy explain that,

> 'Conditions are very, very hard! We are given very small rooms; there are usually no toilets so we must use the bush; water is only available from dams and is therefore stagnant, or from nearby rivers and is used for both washing and drinking. Sometimes we sleep in little boxes with no windows ... on-site life is very unhealthy and Kushanda staff often get sick; we get malaria, diarrhoea, headaches and so on. We eat what the workers eat, and we go into the bush and collect firewood with them. We must not act superior to them, but must be on the same level with them. We simply have to adjust our lives to that of farm labourers.'

Gladys contends that,

> 'to a certain extent this was the easier problem to deal with. The most difficult part of the work was convincing the community members themselves about the programme and its benefits.'

In order to achieve this Kushanda staff first had to 'get into' the workers' community. On one occasion the Kushanda trainer had to wait at the farm beer hall until 10 p.m. because nobody was willing to put her up overnight. The pre-school teacher and her husband were going through a difficult separation, but finally agreed to pretend things were normal and invited her in. Much later they disclosed that her stay with them helped them mend their broken home.

On another occasion, both of the Marondera area senior instructors were the target of a fierce verbal attack from the farm workers:

> 'You are saying that you are married women and you live in Harare, and you have left your husbands and your children to come and tell us how we should raise our own children? Do you know what we call people like you? You are what we describe as the damned prostitutes. No woman with a steady home would indulge in such activities, coming here to sleep on dirt floors!'

Through patience and hard work, the Kushanda staff would slowly begin to have a positive impact on the parents' attitudes. Out of curiosity, many parents would observe the training and see the new activities that their children were engaged in. They began to

appreciate the difference between a woman just sitting with their children and a 'teacher' engaging their little ones in a range of learning activities. But this represented only the first small step in the arduous process of establishing a community-supported ECD centre.

Support on the farm: parent participation and the role of farm owners

Even as parents' awareness and understanding of ECD increased bit by bit, the communities generally remained aloof when it came to taking responsibility for the development of the pre-schools. This was, and continues to be, a fundamental obstacle to achieving a degree of self-sufficiency among the commercial farm pre-schools.

Farm workers do not consider anything on the farm as belonging to them. Pre-schools for their children are no exception. As one mother said,

> 'People here know that they might have to leave the farm anytime for one reason or another, so they do not feel that the pre-school could belong to them even if they benefit from it.' She concluded by stating, 'I do not see any difference between me and the boss's tractor. We both belong to him. I do as the boss says. I would only be able to do what I want when I am in my own home – but I do not have my own home ... We just move from farm to farm, so when I am here I belong to this boss, but when I leave this place it's over.'[5]

The role of the commercial farm owner in the early days of the Project was, therefore, pre-eminent in instituting a pre-school for 'his workers' children', and determining its conditions of operation. This is, by and large, still true, though progress among some farm worker communities may help lead the way toward changes within others. As Talent, the former coordinator for Kushanda at Shandisayi, pointed out, 'The labour force responds to, and follows, the lead of the farmer on everything from work to welfare.' The extent to which farm owners are involved varies, encompassing everything from deducting the wages for the ECD teacher directly from labourers' salaries, or paying the salaries themselves, to using beer hall profits to finance costs such as teachers' salaries. Sometimes they pay the workers to construct a shelter, outdoor play equipment, or toilets; or sometimes they deduct wages from parents who do not send their children to the pre-school. Some owners assume responsibility for all decision-making and financing regarding the pre-school.

The latter approach, while either generous or merely a cost-effective service to increase productivity and improve the health of the workforce, can often impede community involvement by reinforcing the powerlessness of the parents themselves. If the farmer pays, well and good, because it's his farm.

One headmaster of a primary school for farm workers' children commented that,

> 'The parents argue that there was nothing like a pre-school since times known to them. "Your pre-school", they will ask, "where was it before? I think it's just another way of cheating us of our money" ...'

Workers live on these farms to get paid to work the fields. Beyond that, they want to be paid for any other work they are asked to do, even if its ultimate purpose is to benefit them or their children.

The question of what constituted the farm owners' moral, if not legal, obligation toward their workers' family welfare, and what constituted the parents' natural responsibilities towards their children, was not one which the Kushanda Project staff could resolve. Kushanda's challenge and its strategy is, as Jacob said, 'To work with whichever side is positive: the farmer, the parents, the ECEC teachers or headmasters of primary schools. There are very few cases where all sides are positive.' In many instances the wife of the farm manager or foreman is also the farm health worker and pre-school teacher. The active or implicit involvement of someone in the hierarchy of 'power' on the farm can more easily influence the parents to become involved with the ECEC centre. Similarly, the farm owner's wife may play a key role in providing or mobilising support for the pre-school.

Staff members of Save the Children (UK) working with the Kubatsira programme in Bindura have remarked that,

> 'The key to changing farm workers' attitudes about health issues, ECEC or community mobilisation, is usually constant contact with an "outside" catalyst, and it takes a long, long time.'

Having established a beachhead among commercial farm worker communities, Kushanda's focus was now on how best to provide such 'constant contact'.

The training challenge: how to improve quality and supervision

Once the on-site training was completed, it was originally intended that follow-up training and support would be provided through a regular schedule of routine one or two day visits to the teachers at the farm-based centres, at least once per term. As the number of Kushanda-assisted pre-schools increased, however, it became impossible to continue this level of follow-up training. This led to the introduction of 'cluster workshops', in which teachers now participate three times a year. The cluster workshops bring together four to six trained teachers, usually at one of the farm pre-schools, for a period of three days.

These workshops not only provide a concentrated refresher course on all subjects covered in the original training, but also allow the teachers to discuss their progress and problems with one another and to share their experiences. The workshops – in both areas of the Kushanda Project – have become increasingly important for getting the teachers to express themselves freely; to learn from one another's experiences; and to develop a sense of camaraderie which helps to ease the feelings of isolation they often experience within their own communities where they, and their assistant if they have one, are often the only adults to have any notion of the daily joys and pains of operating pre-schools.

Many teachers from pre-schools not associated with the Kushanda Project have asked to join these cluster workshops. This is a good indication that it is not only the material support which Kushanda provides to ECD centres that is valued among rural communities, but also the quality of training and continued personal interest. Many ECD teachers trained under programmes sponsored by the government or other NGOs have commented that Kushanda's training helps teachers to better organise their centres and use their time in order to develop a more interesting play and learning environment for the children.

The training course

The Kushanda training curriculum is designed to: (1) give trainees a sound understanding of early childhood development concepts such as the developmental stages of babies and young children, how to help children develop, and how children learn; (2) offer models on how to organise a pre-school to facilitate different activities that promote the children's development. For example, the arrangement of space and materials, and weekly planning methods; (3) impart basic information on children's health and hygiene requirements, and offer methods for child health monitoring; (4) provide

information on the use of local materials for making play/learning materials; and (5) prepare trainees in managing relationships with parents to promote their children's developmental interests.

One concept used by Kushanda in its training and promotion of ECE centres is the organisation of pre-schools into seven play and learning areas. The concept of the seven play areas, which is also used by many other pre-schools elsewhere, is based upon the idea of learning through play. Each area promotes the learning of ideas and skills in different, though related, fields of knowledge and physical coordination. The seven play areas comprise: 1) blocks, for building things, and stimulating creativity; 2) books, stories, rhymes, pictures, counting materials, puzzles, pegboards, geometrical shapes and colours for promoting cognitive skills; 3) science/discovery (water, sand, playdough, clay, bird nests, and other natural materials) for developing the five senses; 4) art/craft (drawing, painting, modelling clay, making things with 'junk') for stimulating creativity; 5) make-believe: imitation and role play, for example a clinic, a shop, a home corner; 6) music/movement, including traditional and modern songs, rhythmic patterns for emphasising body coordination; and 7) the outdoor play area for developing large muscles using equipment such as swings, slides, see-saws, and climbing bars.

During the course, the trainees learn the theory behind each of the play areas, and observe the trainers or other teachers as they lead children in playing and learning in each area. Eventually they practice leading the activities themselves under the supervision of the trainers. They are tested on the material at the end of the course, and again during follow-up visits and cluster workshops. Almost all of the Kushanda graduates have opted to organise their centres along the lines of the seven play areas, sometimes even when operating in the open air under a tree. One teacher remarked,

'For me, this concept changed the whole way I run the pre-school and the children are definitely benefiting from it. They don't get bored and restless any more, because there are more and better organised toys, pictures, games and play areas to keep them interested. It also helps me a great deal because I can supervise the children better when they are in smaller groups engaged in different activities than when I lead activities that include them all for the whole morning. It also helps me work with the different age groups separately and according to their interests and abilities.'

Follow-up training and supervision is important. One Ministry trained teacher who works with a Kushanda trained colleague said,

Photo: Cluster workshops bring together trained teachers at one pre-school.

> 'No matter how good the original training is, we need more support after we've actually started working. It's too easy to forget some of the concepts and methods for planning activities when we're faced with managing the centres on our own. Sometimes I feel that it's the follow-up visits and these cluster workshops which actually keep us teachers going and which help us create real ECE centres.'

Since August 1991, the Marondera Area has adopted a new training approach. This provides three weeks of training at temporary residential centres such as primary schools, rural council rooms, or other buildings that are available and have nearby accommodation, followed by one week on-site training. This change was requested by the trainees themselves and supported by staff observations that the benefits of group training, as also reflected in the cluster workshops, were extremely helpful to farm-based teachers and would make the one week on-site training more productive. As Nancy Mvuma pointed out, 'It is a way of combining the best training methods from both the Chinyika and Marondera areas of the Project.'

Impact

Obviously, the Kushanda pre-schools in the Marondera Area still have a long struggle ahead, but their successes to date are not going unnoticed. As one primary school headmaster remarked,

> 'We have to appreciate that children from Kushanda pre-schools are always amongst the best pupils in a class. This is because the pre-school has prepared them in the basic stages of learning.'

Yet, he also acknowledged the difficulties,

> 'It is very hard to convince the farm communities of the positive effects of the pre-school, and the parents are very reluctant to pay the teacher. Sometimes at the beginning of the year I ask the pre-school teacher to bring me the register so that I can force the parents who had not paid, to pay before I accept their kids for grade one.'

That is, to pay outstanding fees from the child's last term or year of pre-school. The heads' support, when expressed in such a strong manner, is an important element of these centres' survival. It is also a testimony to their true value.

As noted elsewhere in this text, another major and visible sign of the Project's impact has been the improved health and hygiene of

the children which it serves. The role of the Project in achieving such results cannot be overemphasised. On one farm, for example, there were two teachers, only one of whom was trained by Kushanda. As the untrained teacher illustrates,

> 'One day a child at the centre was passing an intestinal worm and the other teacher was away in town. I thought the child was passing a snake, and I was so scared that I just ran away. Fortunately, my co-worker returned and pulled the intestinal worm out and had the child sent to the clinic for further attention. I now know that it is only ignorance that causes me to make mistakes in caring for the children. I am learning a lot from my colleague and the Kushanda staff.'

During a recent drought, the role of the pre-schools in providing supplementary food such as *mahewu* was greatly appreciated by all the parents. One headmaster explained that,

> 'Last term when a grade one child collapsed in the school assembly, we got a cup of *mahewu* from the pre-school and he regained consciousness. He hadn't really had anything significant to eat for several days.'

On another farm, parents began to take turns cleaning the pre-school and its yard following talks with the teacher and Kushanda staff. One PTA member commented,

> 'Diseases have dropped a lot. Most of the children here used to suffer from scabies, but that has changed since we had the health workshop. We now understand the importance of personal hygiene even though we still often cannot afford to buy soap.'

The introduction of health monitoring books by Kushanda at all the pre-schools has helped to document these changes.

Beyond improvements in the children's health, growth and freedom from frequent illnesses and disease, many parents have come to appreciate the basic safety their children are assured of when they attend the pre-school. In a one month period, Jacob received reports of several accidental deaths of pre-school-aged children on different farms who were not attending the ECEC centres. As Jacob wrote in his weekly reports,

> 'In October, three children aged two to five years old fell into a deep soak-way pit resulting in the deaths of two of them. I feel vigorous health education sessions should be held quite

> regularly because most of these accidents are preventable. On another farm, one child died last week having been crushed by a tree. This was revealed to me when I was talking to a group of mothers about ECEC, and they volunteered that they now understood the importance of pre-schools in offering a safe place for their small children.'

Another remarkable story recorded in the community organiser's weekly reports, was that of a small boy aged three years.

> 'This boy couldn't talk, and when the parents took him for speech therapy they were told that there was nothing that could be done, and that they should just let him join the other children of his age. So the parents enrolled him in the local ECEC centre and now, after about a year, he is able to talk. The parents are thanking Kushanda for this, and are now supporting the pre-school by helping to build an outdoor play area.'

Notes to chapter four

1. UNICEF, 1990

2. Long gum-tree poles and anthill sand mixed with water which produces a mixture with a consistency somewhere between mud and cement.

3. Beer halls are usually a simple shelter – often just a roofed area near the workers' quarters – with a lockable store room at one end. They are often the only form of community recreation and they generate profits from beer sales. One common approach to financing farm-based ECEC or other social services has been either for the farmer to use beer hall profits to pay for workers' welfare activities, for example pre-school teachers' salaries, or to turn the beer hall over to the workers themselves to operate as a business whose profits are to be used for collective social needs. The latter approach has often run into problems owing to the workers' lack of training or experience in operating businesses of any sort. Significantly, many – if not most – of the pre-schools on the commercial farms are actually housed in these beer halls. Not only does this limit the teachers' scope to organise and decorate the room for the children's activities, or store play/learning materials, but it poses numerous health hazards as well. Children make use of the same overused and generally unsanitary toilets and washing facilities used by the beer hall patrons, and the hall itself is often littered with dangerous debris which the children might find and attempt to play with.

4. *Sadza*, the primary staple food for most Zimbabweans, is ground maize meal.

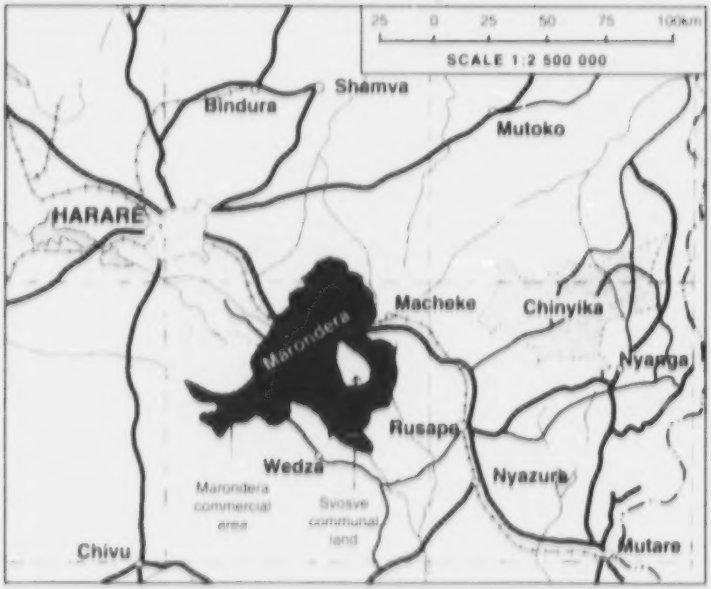
5. *Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*, No.12, November/December 1981, pg.14.

6. Nyathi, Talent. *Report on the Kushanda Pre-School Dissemination Project*. 1991. Harare.

7. It is only through projects such as Kushanda, however, that such a means of cross-fertilisation is possible given the seclusion of the commercial farm worker communities.

Chapter 5

The Chinyika programme



The Project's work in Chinyika covers 75 ECEC centres serving approximately 3,000 children of peasant farming communities and several cooperatives. Chinyika, located in the northeastern part of Zimbabwe, is the country's largest resettlement area. Resettlement areas are tracts of land acquired by the new government after independence in 1980, where mainly landless peasants have been allocated small plots for farming, and commercial farms have been handed over to cooperatives. In 1989 the Kushanda Project established a training centre at one local primary school in Chinyika, which already had an operating pre-school on the premises. The centre served as a base for training ECEC teachers from villages and cooperatives throughout the resettlement area and parts of the neighbouring districts. For four years, its location within the resettlement area greatly facilitated follow-up support and supervision for the ECEC centres established by the newly trained teachers.

Despite the government's efforts in the area, Chinyika remains economically depressed. The area's rough and hilly scrub bush terrain, and generally poor quality soil, have meant that even in the

Photo: Kushanda builds on the enthusiasm of parents, and provides them with training in making toys for their children.

best of years peasant farmers are hard-pressed to produce a surplus beyond their families' subsistence requirements. The main crops cultivated by the peasant farmers include maize, vegetables and some small-scale tobacco farming. During the periodic and severe droughts that Zimbabwe has experienced over the past decade, life in Chinyika is a struggle for survival. The entire area has very poorly maintained roads, and few social services or centres of economic activity within reasonable distances. Indeed, one might have to walk 20 kilometres across rocky hills and small rough valleys with a bag of maize on the head to get to the nearest grinding mill. While the government does provide social services through resettlement offices, schools, clinics, and agricultural extension services, its limited resources and coverage have not kept pace with the needs of the area's growing population. There are also hardly any NGOs active in development efforts among the communities of Chinyika. A large abandoned mine complex in the area has been taken over by government and currently houses civil servants and a large police unit. Apart from this only a few small butchers and general stores, and a few grinding mills are scattered throughout Chinyika.

In most respects, Chinyika is representative of the conditions among the majority of the country's rural population.

Teachers trained in Chinyika by the Kushanda Project received either six or 12 weeks of practical and classroom training (for teachers or supervisors respectively), and returned to their villages to open ECEC centres for the children of their communities. Initially, most teachers operated their pre-schools under trees or in abandoned buildings. The Project continued to support these centres by providing supplies of *mahewu*, newsprint and classroom supplies, and most importantly by offering follow-up training and regular on-site supervision. Gradually, more and more ECEC centres were housed in shelters constructed by the parents themselves with help from the Project. This accomplishment, and the overall level of parent involvement – as evidenced by the payment of pre-school fees to support the teachers, and noticeable improvements in the children's health and hygiene – are testimony to Kushanda's increasing success in mobilising communities to take greater responsibility for their children's early childhood education and care.

At the time Kushanda began working in the area, nearly 4,000 families, or an estimated 30,000 people, had been resettled into 109 villages. There are 22 primary and five secondary schools, and eight rural service centres serving the population. The government had spent an estimated $23 million purchasing the land, constructing these facilities, building roads, and providing draught power and

other assistance to the newly settled farmers. The government also appointed local people as community workers, but the Ministry of Community Development's small resources did not allow it to extend much in the way of training or material support to local institutions anywhere in the country, and Chinyika was no exception.

The educational background and economic skills of the population of Chinyika are varied and comprise teachers, church leaders, craftsmen and women, and small business people. The overwhelming majority are peasant farmers who were previously landless. A good number of the men work in nearby towns, though some work as far away as Harare. The nearest major town, Rusape, like most of the area's towns, is a market town serving farmers. Marondera and Mutare, on opposite sides of Chinyika, are the nearest manufacturing towns. Thus formal, and even informal, employment opportunities close to the resettlement area are few. A number of, mostly agricultural, cooperatives are based in and around the scheme, though few have had much impact on the economic development of the area.

Housing in Chinyika is comprised of a mixture of traditional pole and *daga* huts, and concrete block or brick houses with asbestos roofs. Perhaps slightly more than half of the homes have ventilated toilets or cruder forms of sanitation. Some villages have boreholes or wells, while others depend on nearby rivers and streams for water.

Life in Chinyika differs significantly in many respects from the life of commercial farm labourers, particularly in regard to people's sense of 'home' and continuity. While farm workers receive regular pay, usually monthly salaries, peasant farmers probably earn more on an annual basis from their own crops in a normal year. However, they usually realise their revenues only once a year, after the harvest, and must struggle to stretch it until the next year. In other respects, the communities of these two areas share a lot in common. For example: isolation from life outside their immediate communities; the enormous distances they must travel to go anywhere; and the poor health and hygiene conditions that breed illness and disease which add to the burden of their day to day lives.

Finding a base from which to reach out

Contacts made through several cooperatives around Headlands, where Kushanda had trained teachers, led to meetings with pastors and heads in and around Chinyika who expressed a strong interest in developing pre-schools in their areas. The headmaster at

Arnoldine Primary School was one of them. Chinyika's resettlement officer provided a wealth of information about the area to Kushanda staff and discussed the programme with the peasant farmer families during his many routine visits to villages throughout the scheme. The district office responsible for early childhood education based in Rusape (which includes part of Chinyika in its jurisdiction) offered its support as well.

This eagerness on the part of local leaders, coupled with the enthusiasm of peasant women who, without any outside assistance or training, were already struggling to set up small pre-schools, convinced Kushanda of the soundness of their decision to focus half of the outreach programme on Chinyika.

The community at Arnoldine Primary School agreed to provide Kushanda with one classroom for teacher training, while the Arnoldine pre-school itself used another classroom in a block of primary school rooms. Permanent accommodation for the trainers and weeknight sleeping rooms for the trainees were also provided in two teachers' houses and in nurses' accommodation at the clinic. The setting for Kushanda's new training centre could not have been better for its purposes. It was situated in an institutional education environment and enjoyed the support of all the professional educators and the headmaster, as well as the parents living around the school. Emily Muzavazi states that,

> 'From the day we arrived the headmaster, Mr Dirorimwe, provided us with decent accommodation. When we had problems he was always there and more than willing to assist if we needed him. It is because of his attitude that the training at this centre is a success.'

Equally important, Arnoldine is a school in the rural heartland which shares all the problems and challenges of most of the other communities that send women to Kushanda for training. While Arnoldine is certainly better 'endowed' in terms of institutional resources such as the primary school and a clinic, it shares the common rural realities of a financially poor community comprised mostly of peasant farmer families, isolated from the nearest urban centres and many government services by long distances and poor roads.

The Project's experience at Shandisayi had taught it that the training centre/ECEC centre needed to be a true model which could be replicated in villages with few means. First, the training centre itself should reflect the realities of the community's environment, and second, it should not be such a well-equipped and costly

training ground as to present an unattainable and forbidding model. The trainees who come to the centre should be able to return to their home villages with their enthusiasm about the prospect of implementing an early childhood learning programme undiminished by an alienating sense that they do not have the resources – in terms of finance or their own capacity to teach and organise – to replicate the model they experienced during training. The Project needed to combine an emphasis on the universality of early child development theories, with an emphasis on the need for pre-schools to be built upon the foundations of limited locally available resources. And local resources were certainly as limited at Arnoldine as in all the other villages in the resettlement area.

Training for Chinyika

Once established, at the beginning of 1989, the Chinyika Training Centre offered three terms a year of ECEC Supervisor (senior teacher) training, each lasting 12 weeks. This represented the initial and intensive early childhood education and care training of future pre-school teachers, using a syllabus that had been developed during the previous four years at Shandisayi and elaborated upon with each passing year at Arnoldine. The training was carried out by the senior ECEC instructor and one or two of her three assistants in rotation. The initial target was six trainees a term but, owing to growing demand, classes reached a level of around eight trainees per term by 1992. The programme also offered a six week training course towards the end of each year designed for assistant ECEC teachers for each established village pre-school. This was a shortened version of the full 12 week course.

In addition to ECEC theory and practical training at the pre-school, trainees also learned about pre-school child health. This provided an abridged version of what Farm Health Workers are taught in six week courses, with the emphasis on the health and nutrition of pre-school age children.

The trainees also spent a good deal of time engaging in 'craftwork': making toys and other learning aids. This element of the course joined the theories about how children learn and develop with the need to make materials and toys, to facilitate this process using only locally available materials including junk or scrap matter. This had the added benefit of allowing the teachers to produce items which they could take back with them to use when starting up their centres. Another objective of the craftwork component of the course was to train the teachers to transfer toy-making skills to the parents with an understanding of the toys' developmental use for children. The teachers would also be trained to work with the children themselves to make some of the simpler items in the belief

that children might get more enjoyment out of toys which they help to make themselves. Ultimately, these skills would help ensure that each centre could at least produce its own play/learning materials.

Identifying future ECEC teachers

In general, the training programme ran smoothly, but there were initial problems in the communities' selection of trainees. Some of the early trainees were elderly women who were unable to read or write, making the implementation of the training programme extremely difficult. By increasing the amount of time and effort put into educating the parents about the purpose of ECEC and the training programme prior to their selecting candidates, and with the increasing involvement of the local headmasters in these discussions and in the selection process, the Project began to receive more appropriate trainees. Nevertheless, the senior instructor has always had to cope with the reality that there were big differences in each trainee's ability to learn the different subjects of the course:

> 'I have never come across a trainee who is fast in everything' wrote Emily in one of her progress reports to the project manager. 'She may be fast in writing or craft, but not in her practical work, or vice-versa. But because we cannot leave her behind, I explain to the others that they must be patient and help one another.'

The increasing role of primary school heads was prompted by earlier lessons Project staff had learned about the need to invite the participation of any local leaders who exhibited support for the ECEC programme. The heads' personal and professional interest in promoting education among these disadvantaged communities made them a natural constituency for Kushanda.

Follow-up support and supervision

In the early days of the Chinyika programme, follow-up training and support consisted of almost weekly visits by the senior instructor to the new ECEC centres until such time as she felt they were well established. But, as in Marondera, the rapidly increasing number of centres led to the follow-up training being revised. By 1992, assistant instructors had taken on a greater role in performing these routine visits which were greatly facilitated by the experience and self-confidence they had gained during the intervening years.

Initially there had been serious problems with the quality of follow-up work, due mainly to the reluctance on the part of teachers and

assistant instructors to freely offer criticism or to engage in self-criticism. This was sorted out through Emily's forceful intervention which stressed the necessity of criticism as a method of improving the quality of the programme. Fortunately, she was able to provide examples of positive change generated through criticism regarding numerous aspects of the Project. As assistant instructors and teachers became more accustomed to this method, particularly with the advent of the cluster workshops, it became another important lesson that each participant in the programme helped to teach others in the community.

Routine visits generally last two days each, with the Kushanda staff staying overnight at the host village. These visits allow staff members to observe the pre-school in operation, its progress and problems, relations with the community and the professional performance of the teachers. The staff members produce written reports comprising responses from the pre-school teachers to a series of questions, and their own observations on the operation of the centre.

In addition to these, supervision visits are carried out by senior staff aimed at evaluating the performance of the junior staff through discussion with the teachers, headmasters, parents and other key individuals in the communities. They also further assess and assist in improving the performance of the pre-schools in their relations with the community. The reports emanating from these visits provide the basis for more detailed evaluation of the Project's progress and enable staff to take remedial action to solve urgent problems.

It is, perhaps, this thoroughness and continual commitment to the quality of early childhood education being provided by the Kushanda Project that is most appreciated by communities participating in the programme. Not only does this convey the message to these isolated communities that they are a valued part of Zimbabwean society, but it also helps them to appreciate the critical importance of early childhood development.

Parent participation

One major difference between the Project's two geographic areas, as pointed out by Cephas Saungweme, the Administrator, is that,

> 'People on commercial farms do not own the land, it is not theirs and they can be sacked at any time. In the communal/resettlement areas people know the land is theirs and they put more effort into the pre-schools. There is more

of a team feeling and team work. Even when adults don't have their own children at the pre-school, their nieces, nephews or grandchildren attend, and therefore they take an interest. However, it took time for resettlement areas to build a sense of community.'

Even with a stronger sense of community, initiating and sustaining pre-schools in the Chinyika area has proven quite difficult. The headmaster at the Kubatana Primary school recalled that,

'The community was reluctant at first to support the idea of an ECEC centre and only 13 parents came to the first meeting. But once it was established, we organised a show of activities by the children and more parents became interested. The children demonstrated what they were learning, they knew their left-right orientation, shapes, the use of the playground, and they had developed social skills in dealing with one another and confidence in talking. The ECEC programme helps to bridge the gap between the school and the community. For example, we are now able to discuss issues such as sanitation with parents.'

The importance of finding ways to demonstrate the impact of ECEC on children to the larger community is a major concern for the Project. It is often only through such mechanisms as open days that many parents begin to appreciate the value of pre-schools. Fortunately, an increasing number of centres are instituting these types of fora for parents – a few have one day a week where parents are specifically invited to observe and participate.

Remunerating pre-school teachers

While the most supportive adults feel that teachers could perhaps use more training, they recognise that the key issue is the need to provide better remuneration for their services. Generally, once a trained teacher returns to establish an ECEC centre, and the PTA is formed, a meeting is held at which the community decides how much parents should pay for each child attending the centre. Though the fees vary from village to village, the average is somewhere between $1 and $3 per child per month. With an average of 35 to 45 children enrolled in each of these pre-schools, this amounts to between $45 and $135 a month. This money is often shared between two teachers.'

The failure of communities to pay their pre-school teachers regular salaries is the most frequent cause of the closure of ECEC centres in the programme. While these are clearly poor communities, the

Photo: Follow-up support by Kushanda staff is vital in ensuring the success of a pre-school.

teachers' small salaries which the communities themselves decide upon are certainly within their reach. This is not to say that it is easy. As one teacher said,

> 'Money is the biggest problem in this area. The farmers have gone through successive years of drought, yet agriculture is the only possible source of income. It is very difficult for the communities to raise money for their pre-school teacher, even if they would very much love to do so. The teacher then ends up doing the job out of love for the community's children.'

Many teachers, however, feel that drought and the government's new economic policies are often just excuses parents use. One teacher pointed out that,

> 'The problem of payment existed even in better times, and now in these hard times the parents can still be seen enjoying themselves at the local beer hall.'

As the Project Manager often reminds parents,

> 'The monthly fees that you yourselves have established are generally equal to one litre of beer and a pack of cigarettes. If you're not willing to sacrifice that small amount for your children, you certainly can't expect the Project to assume your responsibilities.'

The headmaster at another primary school in Chinyika said that,

> 'The parents welcome the programme, but they find it very difficult to take on any responsibilities. When people settled in this area, everything was provided for them with a very limited labour contribution from their side. They now have a feeling that if any form of development takes place it should be in the form of a complete kit, without their having to contribute much – especially money – I'm not saying that the training isn't good, but it's not enough. The teachers need some kind of externally provided incentive because the community just isn't ready.'

Some parents' unwillingness to pay is, seemingly, more related to their lack of understanding or appreciation of the value of ECEC than to any other single factor. Indeed, each of the children at these ECEC centres were receiving more than $1 per month worth of *mahewu* from the Project, which in times of drought became a major attraction of the pre-schools. This lack of understanding also

affects parents' willingness to contribute to the pre-school in other ways, such as the construction of an outdoor play area or making toys.

As one staff member recalls,

> '... it was extremely difficult to convince the communities to pay teachers' salaries or to provide labour for constructing pre-school shelters or toilets, or to make toys and equipment for the centres. When taken together these commitments cost more than those associated with sending their children to the formal educational institutions of primary and secondary school, which enjoyed a higher esteem in the eyes of rural parents.'

It is a difficult pattern to break: parents are reluctant to attend meetings regarding the ECEC centre because they do not want to take responsibility for support activities. And since they often don't attend meetings, it is difficult for the teacher or the PTA to show them the value of ECEC or mobilise them to help out. Because the future of the Kushanda Project's ECEC centres rests upon the level of community support, the community organisation and adult health education components have taken on increasing importance throughout the life of the project.

When pre-schools are closed, because parents have failed to pay fees or for any other reason, the Kushanda Project staff intervenes to try and help the community to resolve the problem and re-open the school. Though Kushanda will not let pre-schools lie idle for long, its intervention is always consistent with the programme's principle that it will not pay the teachers or take on the responsibilities of the community in any way. One problem is that occasionally teachers leave, either because they are single women who are mobile and free to pursue new opportunities elsewhere, or because their husbands have had to leave the area to find work. When this happens Kushanda helps the community to arrange an interim solution until another teacher can be trained. As Kushanda staff points out with both pride and humility, 'At least 80 per cent of the Kushanda ECEC centres are operating at all times'.

The programme has also won support from local Ministry of Education workers. According to the Ministry's district ECEC trainer,

> 'If Kushanda had not come, it would have been too difficult for us to cover the area ... Besides, I have discovered that Kushanda's training is more detailed and practical than ours. At its training centre there is a pre-school so the trainees are

> able to practice what they have learned. We train people in theory, then when it comes to practice the situation can be very different.'

She also mentioned that the Ministry training was shorter and that her own follow-up visits might only entail 15 minutes to a half hour with a teacher.

The Kushanda Training Centre at Arnoldine can also take satisfaction in the mere number of its graduates. It trained upwards of 150 teachers since operations began in 1989. The resulting 'explosion' of pre-schools in Chinyika villages has certainly caught the attention of primary school heads, just as in the Marondera area. The Arnoldine headmaster comments that,

> 'Headmasters, as a group, are obviously very concerned about education. We began to notice the differences among young kids who had been in pre-school, just in their interaction with other kids. Something was going on ... and the word began to spread like fire!'

Kushanda's training director for Chinyika says that,

> 'The problem now is that Kushanda's success has created quite a demand from other communities, which our small Project has difficulty in meeting.'

But there can be no doubt that support from headmasters and local education officials has played a considerable part in securing the communities' consent to the work of Kushanda.

Community organisation

It was apparent from the start that the level of Kushanda's involvement with a community significantly influenced the degree of that community's involvement in the pre-school programme. The demands placed upon the time of the Kushanda staff were enormous, and were constantly increasing as the number of pre-schools expanded with each intake of trainees. Indeed, it was never possible for the staff to spend as much time working with the communities as the communities wanted, yet it was clear that constant contact with the parents would go a long way toward achieving the community mobilisation that was necessary to establish a sustainable programme.

For the outreach into Chinyika and Marondera, the Project hired a community organiser in 1990, Jacob Mapuranga, whose role was to try and maintain regular contact with the communities, and assist with all elements of the programme. This would create a degree of continuity between Kushanda's initial contact with communities, and its contact during each stage in its programme development. This innovation has proved worth the investment. Jacob's weekly reports on his visits to the communities has also facilitated the process of learning and documenting the Project's growth.

His main responsibilities were to help communities mobilise themselves to support the pre-schools, and to participate in the health education activities being developed at that time. These were two major innovations in the Project since the move from Shandisayi and the establishment of the Chinyika and Marondera outreach programmes. The evolution of Kushanda's AHE component is described in Chapter 6.

These adaptations resulted from Kushanda's experiences with previous strategies towards community education and mobilisation which relied almost entirely on the ECEC teachers themselves and periodic visits by the senior instructors and their assistants. The Project learned that with its work necessarily focused on improving the quality of training, supervision, and the content of the pre-schools' programme, it was unrealistic to think that its staff members could also play the desperately needed roles of catalysts for mobilising community support and providing health education to the parents.

Jacob had previously been employed by the Ministry of Health as a medical assistant and seconded to the Marondera Rural Council where he was responsible for the farm Health Workers' training.

As such he was both familiar with the Kushanda Project and had trained all the area's farm health workers who now formed the Marondera half of the target group of Kushanda's outreach programme. He was well-known by the local government agencies and rural council staff, which helped facilitate his work. He was required to liaise with relevant government officials operating in the two areas, such as the resettlement officers, local community development officials, and local Ministry of Education officers, as well as with communities and, in Marondera, with commercial farmers.

Jacob took on the responsibility of visiting each village or farm where the establishment of a pre-school was proposed, at least twice before the training, and at least once, though usually more often,

after the trained teacher had returned and started operating the ECEC centre. After his initial visit, he would usually be accompanied by other Kushanda staff such as the senior ECEC instructor and AHE staff. During his pre-training visits, Jacob would meet with the village authorities, or farm owners and managers, and as many fathers and mothers of pre-school age children as possible. In each meeting he would explain the nature of the programme, how to choose a trainee, and the prerequisite that the community must be prepared to bear part of the costs of running the centre once it was in place – including paying the teacher's salary – and to assist the teacher in other ways such as constructing an outdoor play area.

The post-training visits focused on helping to mobilise the communities to live up to their earlier commitment to support the newly established ECEC centre, and on the practical issues of how to establish a PTA, how a PTA should work, and its rights and responsibilities with regard to the children, the teacher and the larger community.

Mobilising for community empowerment

From the beginning, Kushanda was conscious of the need to avoid community dependence upon the Project for the operation of the pre-schools. Kushanda refused to pay teachers' salaries not only because it lacked the resources, but because of the principle that parents should pay for the services which the teachers were providing them and their children. Kushanda also distinguished between avoiding creating dependency on external donor-provided resources, and the extremely useful role that external actors could play as catalysts in the process of aiding communities to recognise their own power to shape their lives and those of their children.

Moreover, Kushanda's status as 'outsiders' was critical in helping to break the isolation of these communities. As one pre-school teacher noted,

> 'The parents like to see Kushanda staff around, it helps to strengthen the relations between all the partners in this programme: Kushanda, the parents, the teachers and the children.'

The Project's staff members were therefore not seen as people who come in and solve a community's problems or take decisions for it, but rather as people who cared enough about its problems that they committed themselves to come into the community and spend time helping it find its own solutions.

The simple fact that the community organiser, and all the other Kushanda staff, paid serious attention to the problems of these communities was itself only the first – albeit critical – step in a process of community self-awareness. This, in turn, helped to lead communities toward developing confidence in their own power to change the conditions of their families' lives. The daily challenge was to ensure that parents recognised that Kushanda was not a charity generously bestowing gifts upon poor neglected communities. It offered instead a committed partnership in a process of development, and its scarce resources could only be invested in communities that took responsibility for their own lives and the institutions which they themselves created to improve their situation.

Notes to chapter five

1. 'Well equipped and costly' in terms of 'modern' equipment, which in Zimbabwe usually means supplies found only in urban centres and which are often imported. As Kushanda has demonstrated over time, it is quite possible to establish 'well equipped' pre-schools through the creative use of local materials which are equally, if not more, valuable for rural children's learning through play and discovery. (For example: wooden toys instead of plastic or metal ones, toys made from 'junk', and homemade musical instruments as opposed to store-bought ones.)

2. The legislated general minimum wage is $157 a month for full-time workers.

Chapter 6

Adult and Health Education

When the Project moved away from the original base at Shandisayi Pfungwa cooperative in 1989, and established the two separate training programmes for ECEC teachers in Chinyika and Marondera, it also expanded its staff and the scope of its services. An Adult and Health Education (AHE) component was added to increase the level of parents' knowledge of child health issues, and to increase their involvement in improving the health and sanitation environment of the community, particularly for their children.

The initiation of the AHE activities followed years of trying different approaches to health education with the teacher trainees and parents, and different tactics for integrating what Kushanda had to offer in this sphere with central and local government health delivery systems. The AHE was designed both to augment interaction with the parents on health and hygiene issues, and to mobilise the community itself to participate in the improvement of its own health conditions, through contributing labour to build toilets, dig refuse pits, construct pot racks and soak-aways.

Where the absence of toilets is a major issue, the AHE staff involve local Ministry of Health officers in discussions with the farm owner or the village to correct this situation. In the resettlement and communal areas, the Ministry of Health will provide cement for the construction of ventilated toilets and the family will contribute the bricks and labour.

The AHE staff is responsible for providing the child health and general health lessons for the teacher trainees, though its larger role is working with the parents. Each village which is in the process of starting a pre-school under the direction of a newly trained teacher receives a week-long visit from a Kushanda AHE staff member. This person lives with the community, observes the ECEC teachers' work, offers advice, and conducts a series of household interviews with parents of the pre-school children to learn the health history of the community.

At the end of the week, a participatory 'seminar' on health issues is held where the discussion focuses on the major health problems facing these families, and on what courses of action they can take to overcome them. The AHE staff member also gives presentations on the major preventable childhood diseases, vaccination schedules,

Photo: During the Adult and Health Education sessions, parents learned to build potracks to keep pots and plates out of the reach of animals.

community sanitation issues, and the prevention of malaria and bilharzia.

After one village health week workshop, a mother on a commercial farm remarked,

> 'You don't know how much we used to accuse each other of witchcraft. There used to be human faeces all over the place ... our children often died of diarrhoea ... we would spend time after the death of the poor child trying to find the killer. Now a lot of parents know that there was never a witch around this farm, it was simply the health hazard situation which used to drive us against each other.'

The discussion of health issues is closely linked to a dialogue on the purpose of early childhood education and care, and the role of parents in relation to their children and to the pre-school. Sometime after the health week, a second, shorter, follow-up visit is conducted partly to check on the impact of the workshop.

The AHE staff also works closely with the pre-school teachers and has introduced health monitoring books for each centre. These enable the teacher to maintain records of the occurrence of illnesses among the children and to take action when a child's healthy development is in jeopardy.

The AHE component of the Kushanda Project evolved in response to the challenge of how Kushanda could help the communities develop a sense of ownership over their pre-schools and act on the responsibilities which such ownership implied. It also resulted from the Project's concerns about the generally poor health of rural children: the fact that learning, and physical and emotional development are all directly influenced by a child's health; and that pre-schools can only augment the primary role of parents in promoting the overall development of their children.

Education with immediate results

The subject of health was an immediate concern for all the community partners of the Kushanda Project. The cruel reality was that lives were being lost. On the day that I visited Chiparahwe Farm ECE centre, few of the community members were there because most were attending the funeral of a four year old child who had died of dehydration due to vomiting. The provision of a simple oral rehydration treatment could have saved this child's life.

The AHE assistant said at the time,

> 'These kinds of tragedies break our hearts, because we know if only we had reached this community with our health education programme earlier the child might be alive today. There is a real sense of urgency about our work. Yet it takes time to help rural people discard old myths and beliefs about witchcraft, and accept that something as simple as clean water mixed with salt and sugar is actually a medicine that can save lives. The distances we have to travel from one community to the next are so great that we can never provide the kind of frequent visits that we would like.'

Because of the need for a form of health education that could empower communities to improve their own health conditions, and because of the almost immediate benefits that would result from such an approach, the AHE component of the programme emerged as a potential vehicle for bridging the gap between the communities' expectations of instant rewards and the Project's objectives of promoting a process of longer-term development. It was also perhaps a more immediately relevant form of adult education.

While literacy training and basic education have a lifelong value in themselves, they do not often provide prompt and tangible material results. Health education, on the other hand, offers the possibility of learning things which have urgent relevance. The rather mystifying world of science and medicine could be brought into the light and offer villagers the chance to avoid or triumph over deadly or disabling diseases and malnutrition.

A snapshot of one health workshop

At a village health week workshop on a commercial farm, organised by John Ngirazi, one of Marondera's AHE instructors, the sun has virtually disappeared and a biting cold is already setting in. The workers have been gathered under the trees since 4.30 p.m. when the farm owner decided to allow some of them to quit work early to attend the workshop. Most have been working since sun-up. John asks 'How can we prevent diarrhoea?', and the participants begin answering: 'By improving hygiene at home: eating only from clean plates; constructing pot racks to keep pots out of reach of the dogs and chickens; by constructing rubbish pits and toilets.'

The parents are eager to take part in the discussion. Most are very poorly clothed against the Zimbabwean winter's severe night-time chill, but they refuse to be distracted by this discomfort from the

subject at hand. It is soon too dark to see and the discussion is brought to a close. John reminds the parents that tomorrow the workshop will continue and he asks them to bring some tools to use in constructing outdoor play equipment for the pre-school. Several parents respond, 'We can't refuse to make things for our kids.' Another voice asks 'Will we be paid?'

Kushanda's struggle continues.

Widening the circle of development: the pursuit of small enterprises

The AHE staff have now taken on the role of helping each community with development projects beginning with enabling PTAs and pre-school teachers to set up model nutrition gardens. The first attempts at setting up these gardens were undermined by the severe drought; but with the good rains in 1993 the Project re-initiated this effort. The gardens project also provides an opportunity for Kushanda staff to work on promoting positive relations between the teachers and the parents.

AHE staff and Jacob Mapuranga, the community organiser, with the community, are also beginning to explore ideas for creating income-generating activities or small enterprises. These will enable the ECEC centres to purchase some basic materials. Kushanda has already distributed a large number of sewing machines' to many of its pre-school communities. Each community should pay a small 'rental' from its sales to the project, which holds the money until the community has decided how to spend it on its ECEC centre. Each sewing group is also responsible for organising the purchase of materials, the use of the machines, the sales of their products, and managing the finances of the 'enterprise'.

The Project is promoting links between these enterprises and the ECEC centres. For example, most of the community sewing enterprises produce clothing for pre-school children to be sold to the parents of the community. Kushanda hopes to promote other small, viable enterprises that might find a ready market among the pre-schools by producing items such as tin cups and plates, small tables and chairs, or containers for water play and washing.

Parent education

Finally, the AHE section now plans to work with the ECEC staff to provide training to the pre-school teachers in parent education. The intention here is to help the teachers develop the skills necessary to interact with the parents on the crucial but delicate issue which can best be phrased in the question: 'What do you do with your

children?[1] In other words: how do parents interact with their children, when and how often do they see them, talk to them, and do the parents allow themselves to be drawn into their children's play at home? If successful, this new ingredient should help close the circle of support between the teachers, the parents and the larger community.

Notes to chapter six

1. Soak-aways: small pits dug to collect dirty water draining from bathing or dish-washing points. The standing water then soaks into the ground rather than spreading across large areas in the form of shallow, stagnant mosquito-infested streams.

2. Nyathi, T., 1991

3. These machines were donated by an interested donor in the UK.

Chapter 7

The Federation of Kushanda Pre-schools: the seeds of a movement for community control and ownership

A further indication of community support, and perhaps the most important one for the future of the pre-schools, has been the growth of the Federation of Kushanda Pre-schools (FKP). The FKP was created in 1991 by parents and teachers representing all Kushanda pre-schools with the support of the Project staff. Initially it served as a forum for discussing ways to improve the ECEC centres and, by exposing each community to the experiences of others, easing their isolation. This body now represents the new framework through which parents and teachers hope to continue to operate their pre-schools.

Gradually this body began electing committees and organising a division of labour among its members to monitor different aspects of the overall programme. As a result, an increasing number of parents, teachers, heads, and village and farm health workers became familiar with how the entire programme was administered and how its parts fit together. Federation officials then began to share planning and management duties with the Kushanda staff, and started to get involved in fundraising efforts as well.

The experience which Federation officials and management committee members gained in this process paved the way for the FKP to take over full administrative responsibility for the project in 1993. Project staff are now directly employed by the Federation, which receives substantial financial support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The Federation plans to increase its overall share of the annual budget during each of the next five years to reach a point where it is largely self-sufficient. It will do this through a combination of local fundraising and revenues from project-related enterprises, complemented by the development of partnerships with a diverse range of donors.

As one FKP officer said,

> 'By the time we took over the Kushanda Project, it had come to resemble a three-legged stool. The first leg is the training for pre-school teachers and the follow-up supervision and support, including the provision of *mahewu* and a few

Photo: The future of rural pre-schools lies primarily in the hands of community-based programmes such as Kushanda.

> educational materials. This enables our pre-schools to operate at a high standard. The second leg is the Adult and Health Education component, and the Community Organiser. These help us parents to stay involved in the programme because we learn things that improve our lives. And the third leg is our own commitment to pay the teachers' salaries and to support the programme in other ways, like building ECEC shelters and making toys. So long as each of the three legs are strong, it works. It is a stool that our children can sit on and not fall.'

The staff members of the Kushanda Project often state that they are the employees of the villages and farm worker communities which they serve. They argue that 'the villagers are our bosses ... without them we would not be working here, we would have to seek employment elsewhere'. They are to some degree ahead of the communities themselves in their concept of this budding pre-school movement, but over the past two and a half years the staff, the pre-school teachers and other members of the communities served by Kushanda have, with the Federation as a catalyst, developed a greater sense of ownership of the ECEC centres.

The FKP was created to join each of the small and isolated communities into one large collective organisation, to establish a system of mutual support, and to evolve a framework in which all pre-school teachers and parents can feel that they are part of wider movement or community. Indeed, the Federation considers this a prerequisite for the long term survival of the Kushanda pre-schools, and it is probably equally true for most other pre-schools in Zimbabwe. As the Kushanda Project Manager wrote in a report to the Bernard van Leer Foundation,

> 'In a developing country such as Zimbabwe, with a large population under the age of 16 and with limited resources, funds for educational structures will always tend to be concentrated on the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Children not yet old enough to enrol in these will always, therefore, either lack access to ECEC programmes or be taught in structures that are small, poor and isolated, lacking that sense of the larger institution which enfolds individual (formal) schools and their individual pupils.'

FKP structures

The FKP consists of all 150 pre-schools established with Kushanda support since the beginning of the programme in 1985. The highest decision-making body in the Federation is the General Meeting

(GM), which brings together one teacher and one PTA representative from each pre-school in the programme. The GM is responsible for dealing with the policies and development of the Kushanda pre-school movement that participants wish to raise. The GM is convened at least once a year, but may be called into session whenever policy or business matters require, and resources permit. The GM is responsible for conducting elections for the FKP Management Committee, which serves as the executive body of the Federation and is answerable to the GM. It is also responsible for the two Area Committees of Chinyika and Marondera. Each of these committees comprise four ECEC teachers and four PTA representatives, and are also attended by senior staff members.

The meetings and the committees represent the FKP pre-schools to government, donors and to the wider national community. The Federation has now taken over responsibility for all matters pertaining to the relationship between the Kushanda Project staff, and the parents and teachers of all the pre-schools; funding; management of Federation resources; and workplans and programme development. The staff members of the Project have now truly become the employees of the FKP.

The creation of the FKP structure offers the advantages of establishing the kind of over-arching framework necessary to end the isolation of small farm and village pre-schools, and it provides an arrangement for the orderly transfer of power from the Project to the communities themselves. It also offers these small rural institutions and communities an unusually powerful voice, particularly when it comes to asking for resources or services from the national 'cake'. The Federation, moreover, offers real incentives for the development of strong PTAs in these villages and farms. The incentives are not only material, though the travel and subsistence allowances for meetings, while very small, are significant to a rural peasant or farm worker. There is also the incentive of social status attached to being a participant in the decision-making bodies of a large organisation, and the representative of one's own community in a movement which, hopefully, will enjoy real status in the wider society. Finally, the FKP also helps enhance the status of the pre-school teachers in their relations with the parents in their respective communities.

A smooth transfer of power

The process of transferring authority for the entire programme to the FKP, and the end of the ECEC teacher training component, has helped considerably to focus the communities on the fundamental issues of community empowerment and control which the

Kushanda Project has struggled to address for years. Kushanda staff have attempted to increase the involvement of FKP officials in every aspect of the Project's work, through discussions, visits to the centres, and informal training on such topics as relations with government ministries, donors, or farm owners.

Equally important have been the activities centred on transferring organisational skills to the FKP leadership such as the management of meetings; decision-making; budget administration; planning; and programme supervision. The FKP's immediate focus is on financing and administering the Project to continue support to the existing pre-schools. Though this includes follow-up training, training for new teachers for new pre-schools has been discontinued in order to concentrate on solidifying the community control of the Federation, maintaining the quality of existing ECEC centres, and building the collective strength of the FKP. However, the training programme is being carried out by an offshoot of the Project in a different form and setting in other parts of the country.

The FKP and shifting government ECEC policies

Complicating the development of the FKP, or any community-based pre-school movement in Zimbabwe, is the widely held belief among parents that the government is either paying ECEC teachers or that it will do so in the near future. This undermines parents' willingness to contribute themselves, and the reality is that the government does not pay pre-school teachers. Since 1988, the Ministry of Education has offered a very small 'allowance' of $12 to $15 a month to ECEC teachers, for a maximum of nine months a year no matter how many months their centres operate. This payment has been irregular and teachers at pre-schools on commercial farms are not paid at all by the government.

In many observers' views, the provision of such a pitifully small allowance, when a teacher does actually receive it, has done more harm than good because of the false impression it creates among parents. According to the UNICEF report, '94 per cent of ECEC teachers received no allowances in 1988-1989', and though some Kushanda pre-school teachers belatedly received around $72 in 1992 for the previous year's work, equal to about $6 a month, most still do not receive a monthly allowance. One Kushanda progress report notes that,

> 'It is surprising how the deployment of such paltry sums has had such a large negative effect in undermining what previously existed. Most communities we contacted prior to training were prepared to take this small step in self-reliance,

but the government's allowances have had the unintended effect of thwarting that spirit.'

This is but one issue within the larger question of government intervention in the field of ECEC that the EKP will have to grapple with in the future.

The recent steps taken by the Ministry of Education to start a new process of registering pre-schools help to demonstrate the importance of an organisation such as the EKP. It is argued that a new registration policy will allow the government to provide larger amounts of funding – closer to real salaries – to the pre-schools that have merited registration. However, this process would erase from consideration the majority of existing rural pre-schools. Because one of the major criteria for determining registration seems likely to be the centre's physical condition, most Kushanda pre-schools would not qualify.

Though it is generally acknowledged by government visitors that the standards of teaching and operation at Kushanda pre-schools are reasonably good, the actual accommodation is a problem – one which most trainees cope with quite well. Indeed, this is one of the features of their competence. Unfortunately, in the words of one Kushanda report,

> 'By adopting an approach to ECEC which focuses on pre-conditions for registration, and by confusing construction with development, the bureaucracy is likely to omit the majority of poor rural children from whatever responsibilities it assumes for ECEC centres.'

Consequently, the future of rural pre-schools, and therefore of thousands of children, lies primarily in the hands of community-based NGO programmes such as Kushanda, and organisations such as the EKP. For even if government were to change its approach to ECEC registration and support, it still lacks the financial resources needed to support the estimated 45,714 ECEC staff and 7,217 ECEC centres already operating in the country, most of which currently receive little material support from the government.

The EKP Chairperson, Mr Rupfutse, and Treasurer, Mr Mutumbi, contend that,

> 'With the coming of independence, people thought the government would do everything. Twelve years later, and with the drought and the ESAP, parents are more pinched than before, but their attitudes are changing ... despite the

> hardships, parents are recognising the need to contribute because they see that government help is not enough ... Government is also dependent on donors for many of these kinds of programmes (ECEC) ... and otherwise gets its money from taxes on the people. So if the parents don't pay the teachers themselves, they will have to rely on their urban-based relatives to pay more taxes so that the government can pay these teachers.'

Staff at Kushanda and other NGOs argue that there is a need to strengthen the network of ECEC and related NGOs in order for them to begin to influence the terms of government involvement in ECEC in Zimbabwe, since it is clear that they will continue to bear much of the responsibility for training and supervision, and for organisational and material support of pre-schools for years to come. The development of the FKP is a critical part of this process, for while service organisations can promote productive partnerships between government, communities and NGOs to improve ECEC in the country, only parents themselves can actually implement community-based programmes and hold the government accountable for its share of the work.

The challenges ahead: 'making the bread!'

The FKP has tremendous potential but the challenges of continuing and improving the operations of the Kushanda pre-schools are numerous. The Federation will not only be responsible for ensuring that parents and teachers fulfil their obligations to their own centres, but will also take responsibility for financing and managing the provision of materials such as *mahewu*, newsprint, and paints, to its ECEC centres; and for transportation and subsistence allowances to enable staff to travel between centres; and for staff salaries and administration expenses.

The FKP will require a good deal of 'clout' in order to secure the funding needed and the cooperation of government departments. 'Clout', in the minds of donors and government officials alike, is often measured in terms of the numbers that a membership organisation can assemble. Numbers – not only of children, but of parents and teachers – that is, voters. If the FKP is able to maintain the membership of its current pre-school communities, it will represent somewhere between 7,000 and 9,000 parents at any given point in time, spread across four political constituencies who are supporting the cause of ECEC for their children. This is quite a sizeable interest group, and indeed will represent quite an accomplishment for small rural villages and farm communities.

In the FKP Secretary's Annual Report of the Chinyika Area Committee to the General Meeting, Petronella Mutsikwi stated,

> 'We still have many deserts to cross; hunger, thirst, and other general hardships to endure before our children attain the type of lives we all yearn for. We parents are now masters at the table and we have to make the bread ... We must remember as we conceive our children and celebrate their birthdays, that the most important thing is their education and health.'

Notes to chapter seven

1. UNICEF, 1990, pg.63

Chapter 8

Conclusion: carrying the torch

The evolution of the Kushanda Project's strategies for promoting pre-school education and care in these two very different rural areas has been guided by a series of 'lessons learned' throughout the life of the Project. Foremost among these was how to provide meaningful training.

The fact that the first pre-school was launched simultaneously with the training programme meant that trainees had to take responsibility for organising the children's daily activities and administering the pre-schools' affairs even as they began to receive instruction in early childhood development. This forced the trainees to gain practical experience in the mornings backed up by theoretical concepts which they studied in the afternoons. It also gave the trainers the opportunity to closely observe the performance of their students, and to evaluate each one's comprehension of the ECD concepts and her ability to put them into practice.

Reflecting on this early experience, one Kushanda staff member said that,

> 'By having to take on both activities at the same time, we stumbled into an approach to training that quickly became one of our most enduring principles. Namely, that you cannot seriously embark upon training ECDE teachers unless you are also actually working with children every day. It's a simple and obvious truth, yet we could easily have missed it, as government and other NGOs have done in continuing to use only classroom-based theoretical training approaches.'

This simple truth included the idea that the training should also take place within a setting similar to those that the trainees would find upon returning to their own villages. As one of the trainers pointed out, 'There is no point in trying to create a model based on the more numerous urban ECDE training programs which generally have everything', such as buildings with ample space and natural or artificial light, toilets and washroom facilities, and a host of modern furniture, toys, and educational aids. 'To do so would be to ignore the rural realities,' she added.

Just as the Kushanda ECDE Dissemination Programme, over eight years, has spread its wings and touched the lives of thousands of rural children; the Federation of Kushanda Pre-schools is now working to spread its own wings to promote and protect the futures

Photo: Children – the building blocks of Zimbabwe's future.

of these children by continuing to strengthen the role of the most important supporters of ECEC – the parents themselves and the communities which they represent.

A second and continuing lesson, and challenge, which the Kushanda Project confronts is the need to find ways to reconcile the parents' desire to see immediate results or rewards from their efforts, to the longer term objectives of promoting community-sustainable forms of early childhood education and care in a large number of rural communities. Given the hard lives of the peasant farmers and commercial farm labourers, and the poverty of their communities, it is difficult to elicit much time, organisation, or work from these parents whose major preoccupations regarding their young children are simply ensuring that there is food on the table, and keeping them out of harm's way until they are old enough to go to primary school.

The most tangible short term benefit which the Project could offer was the improved health of the children in the care of Kushanda-trained teachers. Once the pre-schools started operating and teachers worked with parents to improve the children's personal hygiene and to ensure that all children received relevant vaccinations, and with the pre-schools' provision of *mahewu*, the health of the children visibly improved in most communities. The parents took note and increasingly viewed the ECEC programme as an asset to the community. Concern about children's health was a major reason for the development of the Adult Health Education component of the Project. It became a natural way to link parent participation to improving the quality of child-centred care and education.

Another important lesson for the Project has been learning how to cooperate with individuals and institutions which can play an important role in the programme's development. Over the years, local heads of primary schools and first grade teachers were among the first to see the benefits of pre-schools. They became ardent promoters of ECEC and supporters of the Kushanda Project because of their observations of the impact of the programme. These individuals often exercise considerable influence over the adults in rural communities, and the recognition and promotion of this influence by Kushanda staff definitely helped to strengthen the programme. Heads and first grade teachers began to play a key supporting role in the selection of trainees by the communities. By emphasising the qualities a pre-school teacher should have, at a time when many parents had only the vaguest idea of what ECEC work entailed, they made an enormous contribution to the quality of the programme.

Similarly, the Kushanda Project developed relations of mutual support with government agencies and local authorities with an interest in, and responsibilities for, early childhood development. These included the Ministries of Education and Health, and the rural councils. The levels of cooperation ranged from giving a ride to a government health worker from one village to the next, to providing instruction to trainees in the rural councils' Farm Health Workers programme.

At the farm-based pre-schools, the Kushanda staff learned to develop partnerships with the farm owners as well as the workers, in the interest of promoting ECEC services for the children on these farms. Owing to the unique dynamics of farm life, the farm owners, and often their wives, can be important actors in ensuring that a pre-school operates on the premises. While Kushanda staff members can find themselves on occasion thrust into difficult positions between the workers and the owners, they always keep in mind the objective of securing the resources necessary to provide better quality ECEC services for the communities' pre-school children.

Kushanda's experiences on the commercial farms have been instructive, and the Project's flexibility has allowed it to continuously 'fine-tune' the programme to achieve better results. The four week on-site training resulted from staff observations that the original approach of one day a week training visits was having a negligible impact. The communities and their teachers required more regular and supportive contact if they were going to embrace the idea of community-run pre-schools.

Similarly, staff learned that offering teachers the chance to interact with colleagues from neighbouring farms had a tremendous effect on reinforcing their knowledge of, and confidence in, early childhood education and care methods and concepts. Such encounters also helped to break their sense of isolation. As a result, Kushanda began holding 'cluster workshops' once a term for its teachers. Each workshop brought together four to six teachers from pre-schools located relatively close to one another – though even these distances are usually considerable. The workshops provide regular opportunities to discuss progress and problems at each of the centres, and to review ECD materials.

As the numbers of communities and pre-schools receiving support grew, it became more difficult for the Project to organise and sift through the enormous amount of information, opinions, problems, and indications of success or failure, which project staff accumulated in their contact with the communities.

Activities such as the cluster workshops and the second village health visits, became important fora for critically evaluating the progress of the Project and for exploring new approaches to the constantly changing problems it encountered. In this way, the Kushanda staff learned to accurately gauge the communities' true interests and demands, and, equally, their capabilities for assuming greater responsibility for the programme.

Throughout, Kushanda has stuck to its core belief that the pre-schools will only survive if the communities come to own and control them. Consequently, the Project has diligently avoided assuming responsibility for any element of the programme which the communities have committed themselves to manage. This includes the payment of teachers' salaries, which constitutes the original agreement of partnership between the communities and the Kushanda Project. Though it continues to be one of the most arduous elements of the Project, the communities have generally fulfilled their obligations though very sporadically. In the end, as the Project Manager notes, '80 per cent of the 150 centres are operating five days a week'; this is one indication of at least adequate community support for the ECEC teachers and the programme.

Throughout the life of the Project, Kushanda has – without illusions – faced the paradox of early childhood education and care in rural Zimbabwe:

> Provided that communities can be mobilised to fund the teacher and erect the structures for ECEC centres, this is perhaps the only stage or form of education (or indeed of health or any other type of social service) small enough to be truly community-based in that a single community, however small, can be responsible for it, can control and manage it and indeed genuinely and directly own it through having provided both the infrastructure and a large proportion of its continuing requirements for funding.
>
> At the same time, the small size of each of these communities tends to be an obstacle to attracting the interest or support of external resources, whether government, donors or NGOs, which are still needed to augment their own efforts and achieve a standard of ECEC which their children deserve.

The Project staff have worked diligently to find an answer to this puzzle, and to shed light on the possibilities of a new approach. The torch has now been passed to the Federation of Kushanda

Pre-schools, and it is hoped that this truly community-based organisation can begin to resolve the paradox in favour of the interests of Zimbabwe's children, and therefore the nation's future.

Notes to chapter eight

1. John Conradie, *Internal mid-term report 1991*.

Afterword

Salih Booker finished work on *We are your children* in the middle of 1993. By coincidence, that was the time the project itself was drawing to an end. The official date for the termination of the Kushanda Pre-schools Dissemination Project was 30 June 1993. Training, at Arnoldine and Chinyika and on the Marondera commercial farms, of teachers for new centres had stopped at the end of January. The remaining months were taken up with an intensified programme of contact visits and cluster workshops to ensure that as many as possible of the 160 centres established with the help of the Kushanda Project over the previous six years were still open, functioning and able to face the future with a reasonable chance of survival. In addition, in May 1993, all the project staff and some FKP Committee members attended a four-week organisation workshop held near Karoi, 200 km north west of Harare under the auspices of the Southern Africa Development Trust (SADET).

Of course, as the book – especially its last section – has shown, the individual centres are not expected to face the future alone, in the isolation that Salih Booker has noted and stressed.

From the time the proposal for the years 1990-1993 was being prepared, the need for an overarching structure or grouping to help sustain the centres after the programme closed down was very much to the fore in the minds of all those working on the project. So, although the pressing tasks of training and establishment did not allow a great deal of time for for long term initiatives, work on the creation of the Federation of Kushanda Preschools (FKP) proceeded alongside those activities, not always steadily, but always as a matter of urgency.

The first general meeting, of two representatives each from all of the Kushanda-supported centres, took place in April 1991. This meeting, less than half the size of present-day AGMs, established and elected the two Area Committees (for Marondera and Chinyika) and the Management Committee, for the entire grouping. These Committees met, together with staff members, as often as time allowed over the 12 months before the next AGM and they began to learn the tasks they would need to carry out once the FKP became an independent entity. The Management Committee elected at the 1992 AGM later became the Board of Trustees of the FKP, but before that time it played a vital role in drawing up, with the assistance of

Photo: TACTICIM will ensure that Kushanda's work continues.

Salih Booker, the proposal for the Federation's five-year programme and negotiating funding for it from the Bernard van Leer Foundation and Terre des Hommes Deutschland.

With that support the FKP became a legal entity in its own right when eight members of the 1992 Management Committee together with the project manager (Advisor and Executive Trustee) and two external members, as founders and intending trustees, signed the Deed of Trust which was registered in July 1993.

Together with a full-time staff of four members, the Board and the Area and Management Committees have kept the Federation and the centres – or nearly all of them – alive and on course since then.

The 18 months that have passed have seen, it would generally be true to say, a growing sense of the corporate nature of the Federation and its member centres and communities. It has also seen a realisation – slow in coming perhaps, and still patchy – of the need for unity of purpose and for dedication and effort to keep the Federation developing along the lines that its founders envisioned and to which all those participating have committed themselves. One development that was not at all clearly foreseen – or at least not to the degree that has transpired – has been the enthusiastic participation in the work of FKP by some school heads and other primary school staff, an intervention that has made a very significant contribution to the Federation's ability to keep centres open or to re-open centres that have closed. In recognition of this, the Board has created an advisory group, the school heads' Reference Committee, that sits jointly with it and the Federation Committees four or five times a year.

The massive amount of documentation that the FKP has generated in its short life – consisting of minutes, planning papers, reports, guidelines, budgets, and records of the group's participation in meetings with and visits to other bodies in the field of ECD – all attest to the emergence of an independent grassroots group with a deepening sense of its own identity and purpose, of its many tasks and of the importance of the work it is carrying on.

When the Federation was being planned and established, it was assumed that, since training by Kushanda project staff was coming to an end, the number of centres would remain static, and that its support work would always be limited to the number of centres that existed on 30 June 1993. Things have turned out rather differently, however, due to the support given by the Bernard van Leer Foundation to an experimental, model of training that was first put into practice in September 1993, just as the FKP assumed its independent identity.

This new model, christened Teacher and Community Training and Involvement in Control, Ownership and Management or TACTICOM for short, could not be called new since it was specifically targeted to deal with the problems and difficulties that the Kushanda project in its various manifestations had found most intractable and which in some cases it had not succeeded in confronting and overcoming. At the same time most of the rest of the training structures and activities of the 'old' project were incorporated into the TACTICOM model: This aims to establish clusters consisting of between five and ten mutually supportive, community-based ECD centres. To do this, a six-week long TACTICOM workshop (TW) is held on site in one (or, by rotation, more than one) of the villages/farms of the cluster. These TWs are run by a group – 'the Team' – consisting of all those Kushanda staff members who are not working for the FKP.

The training, in ECD and in pre-school child health education (PCHE), for the ECD workers who have been selected by the communities of the cluster to run the ECEC centres, continues to evolve within the parameters of the model developed over the years of the Kushanda project. But in addition the TACTICOM Team spends nearly half the workshop time in direct contact with the community, through 'DVs' (home/domiciliary visits) where all topics relating to child health and development are open to one-to-one discussion. During the TWs the communities also jointly participate with Team members in TW 'projects', for example the construction of outdoor play equipment, toilets and nutrition gardens for the ECD centres.

Although the Team members carry out the day-to-day tasks involved in each TW, the responsibility for the initial organisation, the overall running, the successful outcome and long term survival of the centres is very much a joint affair. The Team and the communities share this responsibility through a cluster Steering Committee that is elected during the three preparatory 'advance' visits made by some Team members starting six to eight weeks before the TW begins. To widen the base of community involvement the elected Steering Committee usually coopts local leaders with significant roles in the sphere of child development. These might include the head of the primary school and/or the schools' TIC (teacher in charge of 'infant' classes) the Environmental Health Technician, the Village Community Worker.

Eight TACTICOM workshops have been run since September 1993. From these nearly 60 new centres have emerged. To find a home for these, to continue the TACTICOM training process of five years and to sustain the further 25-30 clusters generated as a result, the Bernard van Leer Foundation has agreed to support a new intervention –

Kuumba ne Tarisiro, 'to create and sustain/build and maintain'. This will enable both the establishment of about 200 new centres in 25-30 clusters and their absorption into FKP's support and maintenance structures.

The Federation, since mid-1993, has had solely a maintenance function; TACTICOM only a training one. Conjoined, these two wings of Kushanda pre-schools will make a single harmonious entity, will allow the movement and its members to 'take off and fly'.

John Conradie
Project Manager

Foundation Publications

The environment of the child.

Terezinha Nunes (Occasional Paper No 5)

In 1992 the Foundation commissioned Dr Terezinha Nunes of the Institute of Education in London, to develop a theoretical framework on the environment of the child. This paper outlines models of children's socio-cultural environments which could help in the design and evaluation of programmes aimed at improving children's welfare. The paper examines two characteristics of many children's environments – poverty and discrimination – and includes a review of the literature about the environmental factors which influence children's development.

Published 1994. ISBN 90-6195-026-0 (also available in Spanish)

Evaluation in Action: a case study of an under-fives centre in Scotland.

Joyce Watt (Occasional Paper No 3)

The body of this paper is the evaluation report of a Foundation-supported project in the United Kingdom. It is preceded by an examination of the issues involved in evaluation, and an explanation of the way in which this particular study was carried out. It has been published with the external evaluator in mind, but will be of interest to all those involved in the evaluation of community-oriented projects. Published 1988. ISBN 90-6195-014-7

Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Policy Alternatives.

Glen Nimnicht and Marta Arango with Lydia Hearn (Occasional Paper No 2)

The paper reviews conventional, institution-based approaches to the care and education of young children in disadvantaged societies and proposes the development of alternative, low-cost strategies which take account of family and community resources and involvement as the starting point for such programmes. Published 1987.

Early Childhood Care and Education: the Challenge.

Walter Barker (Occasional Paper No 1)

The first in a series of Occasional Papers addressing issues of major importance to policy makers, practitioners and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children.

Published 1987.

A full list of all the Foundation's publications and videos in English and Spanish is available from the Foundation. Publications are available free of charge in single copies to interested individuals and organisations but charges will be made for multiple copies. Please write to the Communications Section at the address given below.

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The Kushanda Project takes its name from the Shona expression, *Kushandisa zvaripo*, which means 'to use what is there', or, 'to make what is there work'. This saying not only captures the Project's spirit of self-reliance, but also the fact that for the children of Zimbabwe's rural majority, early childhood services were only likely to become accessible if their parents learned how to use the material and human resources available in the immediate environment to make community-based pre-schools a reality. Kushanda's mission was to show how this could be done.

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